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From the Guest Editor. . .

Playful Teaching Leads to Children's Long-term Learning

Research shows that children do not readily and easily relinquish their long-held science misconceptions (Abdi, 2006; Good & Brophy, 1997). Some of these misconceptions (such as "light travels faster at night" or "the moon cannot be seen in the daytime") linger on throughout their lives. Yet. children's confused concepts can be challenged through a playful science program and active teaching and learning. Playful science is what this issue of ***Play, Policy, and Practice Connections*** addresses.

This issue is for teachers who want to connect play and science. They can connect new science concepts to students' correct prior knowledge. Playful science allows children to learn new science concepts meaningfully and conceptually. I hope you enjoy this issue!

Respectfully.
S. Wali Abdi
The University of Memphis

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From the Managing Editor. . .

This edition of ***Play, Policy, and Practice Connections*** comes to you as the result of tireless efforts of a few key people who have helped with the recruitment of authors, making suggested revisions, and making the final edits. I would like to thank S. Wali Abdi and Satomi Taylor, the guest editors. Also, Judy VanHoorn, a nationally recognized expert on science and play, deserves a huge thanks for serving as an external reviewer for the articles. Her wise and explicit comments helped all of us in making this issue come together and move everything up a notch to a higher level of discourse. And, finally, I cannot thank the authors enough for their initial submissions and multiple rewrites as we shaped the direction of this issue. Knowing that this "on line" issue will reach hundreds of readers at the touch of a key makes it incumbent on us to offer information that is accurate, timely, and complete. Thank you to all of you for staying with us throughout the longer process.

Please enjoy and share our first issue dedicated to the topic of science and play!

Yours,
Sandi Waite-Stupiansky
Edinboro University of PA

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Inside this Issue. . .

Supporting Inquiry Reasoning

Sally Blake
University of Memphis

Young children are often called "natural scientists" for a variety of reasons. They come to schools interested in almost everything, eager to explore their environments with all of their senses.

> *You can see it from the moment of birth: Babies use all of their senses to make connections with their environment, and through those connections they begin to make sense of their world. As children discover objects and situations that are puzzling or intriguing--things that provoke their curiosity--they begin asking questions and looking for ways to find answers, all in an effort to understand the world around them. This is the essence of the inquiry process.* *(Kahle, 2000, p. iiv)*

Educators of young children are well aware of this spontaneous nature of children's investigations. Children's daily playtime activities naturally engage them in "science" (Kahle, 2000). As they develop explanations about the world around them, they are exploring scientific concepts. While they are discovering their world through play, they are questioning and investigating. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are learned through active investigations, data collection, inference, repetition, and discourse about results and meaning, all of which are found in young children's play.

Science is understood to be a process of finding out and a system for organizing and reporting discoveries. Science is seen as a way of thinking and trying to understand the world (Lind, 2004). Children constantly are testing and adapting informal hypotheses by their play behaviors as they explore their world. The field of science evolved through exploration of the natural world much like children develop their ideas about their environment through active exploration, testing limits and interactions, and manipulating variables and situations. For John Dewey (1938), inquiry involved allowing children to learn from direct experience and cultivate their natural curiosity. He believed that the essentials of creative thinking were contained in the processes of science, and that intellectual activity was much the same whether in the kindergarten or the scientific laboratory. This interactive inquiry-based perspective is recommended by the National Science Education Standards (National Academy of Sciences, 1996) and identified by the National Research Council (2005) as well as the National Science Foundation as "best practice" in science learning.

Early childhood educators have long supported the use of investigations and active play explorations for children's development. Both theorists and researchers alike do concur about a common set of characteristics that distinguish play behaviors from nonplay behaviors for children across all ages, domains, and cultures. These unique features include behaviors that are the following: 1) intrinsically motivated and self-initiated, 2) process oriented, 3) non-literal and pleasurable, 4) exploratory and active, and 5) rule-governed (Fromberg, 1998, 2002; Garvey, 1990; Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). These features make play both a process and a product. As a *process,* play facilitates individual understanding of skills, concepts, and dispositions; as a *product*, play provides the vehicle for children to demonstrate their understanding of skills, concepts, and dispositions (Fromberg, 1998, 2002).

Inquiry includes behaviors that are the following: 1) intrinsically motivated through questioning, 2) process oriented, 3) exploratory and active, and 4) rule governed, and 5) can be pleasurable. As a *process*, inquiry facilitates skills and concepts; as a *product*, inquiry provides the vehicle for children to demonstrate and develop their understanding of skills and concepts (Kahle, 2000). Inquiry-based science and play share the same characteristics of process and products which indicate the potential for support and integration.

Using Play to Develop Inquiry Reasoning

Scientific inquiry refers to the diverse ways in which scientists study the natural world and propose explanations based on evidence derived from their work. It also refers to the activities of children in which they develop knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and understanding of how scientists study the natural world (NAS, 1996). The process of using inquiry depends on the development of inquiry reasoning, or a chain of thinking and behaviors that leads inquiry investigations. In young children, inquiry is evident in tangible tasks. During block play a child stacks blocks until they fall. The child repeats this using different block shapes multiple times until a tower emerges. The child may try other blocks to see what happens. This approach to play is an example of evolving inquiry reasoning. The free exploration, adaptation, and extension of everyday play provides evidence of how children explore their environments. Children's daily playtime activities naturally engage them in "science" (Lind, 2004). As they develop explanations about the world around them, they are exploring scientific concepts.

However, to develop inquiry reasoning, activity alone is not enough. The addition of an explanation of how and why the tower was supported enhances science understanding. The teacher often takes the role of extender in inquiry reasoning with children through questioning. This part is crucial for inquiry reasoning. An explanation is the result of combining intellectual activity with discrete facts gathered through inquiry (Dyasi, 2000). Adding the why by using the child's own thinking is a powerful tool for development and understanding.

A major way children take ownership of new information is by playing with it. Learning requires an interactive balance of gaining the facts and skills required by the culture and making information one's own. This interactive cycle helps children understand their world in an intrinsically motivating fashion (Fromberg, 2002; McCune & Zanes, 2001; Wolery & McWilliams, 1998). Teachers could include the "How do you know….." and the "Why do you think….." types of questions during interactions with children during play. Children provide a window through which we can "see" their thinking and analyze the knowledge and dispositions they bring to bear on their activities (Dyasi, 2000). This window of opportunity allows teachers to build science understanding in a natural, non-threatening manner.

Programs and Resources

One new approach to inquiry and play is evident in the Head Start on Science and Communication (HSSC) Program. The HSSC program, now operating in approximately 40 low- and middle-income schools in the Rochester, New York, area, uses science as the organizing core through which language and literacy and other preschool skills are taught. This curriculum is organized around scientific processes as defined in the national science standards (NAS,1996) and by the American Association for the Advancement of Science Benchmarks (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1993) which include observing, comparing, classifying, measuring, sequencing, quantifying, representing data, interpreting representations, predicting, replicating, and reporting. This sequence of investigation is the Inquiry Cycle. The use of inquiry play investigations is strongly supported through the research from this program.

Many new texts such as, *Exploring Science and Mathematics in a Child's World (*Davis & Keller, 2007), *Science Experiences for the Early Childhood Years: An Integrated Affective Approach (*Harlan & Rivkin, 2007), and *Young Child as Scientist, The: A Constructivist Approach to Early Childhood Science Education* (Chaille & Britain, 2003) support the use of inquiry in early childhood programs. A web search on Google using the words "inquiry, play, and young children" will provide several good articles about the connections of these two areas.

Is Early Childhood the Key to Better Science?

Concern about science education and science standards has been driven by worries that American students lag behind their peers in international rankings and the gap among science achievement between groups of students in American schools. Eighty-two percent of our nation's twelfth graders performed below the proficient level on the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test and the 2005 results indicate a small increase in 4th grade scores, no gain in middle school, and an actual decrease in high school performance (U.S. Department of Education 2007). The longer students stay in the current system the worse they do. Unfortunately, when young children leave early childhood education programs and move into a more structured system of education, their natural curiosity is rarely supported. Schools may redefine children's thinking to fit a narrow understanding of the nature of science when curriculum becomes locked into traditional methods of instruction. Play supports inquiry and active investigation. Both of these elements are rarely found in schools after children enter first grade. Early childhood is the most important period for science education, but only if we adapt such instruction to the unique needs, interests, and abilities of young children (Elkind, 2004).

A national consensus has evolved that pre-school- and primary-level science is and must be an active enterprise. This consensus can be clearly seen in the national reform documents such as *NSES* and *Benchmarks* and *Science for All Americans* (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1990; 1993). These documents are aligned with the NAEYC guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). Through the processes of asking questions, obtaining answers, attaching meaning to the results of their investigations, and relating the meanings they make to established scientific knowledge, children build a repertoire of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that affirm their human capacity to productively use inquiry for their development. They also acquire significant science concepts.

Early childhood programs (birth to age 8) have long been considered essential to promoting children's academic and school readiness (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Learning to use the inquiry method may be a goal of the science curriculum, but it also applies to mathematics, health studies, social studies and other areas that require problem solving (Bredekamp, 2006). Using play as the method of instruction allows children to build on their natural understanding of phenomena. Supporting children's play investigations provides opportunities for children to internalize their ideas and understanding of how the world works. Effective science teaching holistically engages children emotionally, as well as intellectually, physically, and socially. It strengthens children's need for active involvement in knowledge building, with clear conceptual goals and appropriate adult guidance to yield valid learning. Current psychological, educational and brain research demonstrates the relevance of specific concept-building activities to

AAAS Benchmark Standards for science education (Harlan & Rivkin, 2007).

The key to better science learning may lie in the philosophy of play. Play creates a risk-free environment which allows active exploration and the opportunity to try different ideas. Play gives children the opportunity to be scientists as they solve problems, test ideas, create experiments, and change conditions of their explorations. Play develops critical thinking as children find solutions and make adjustments to their environment on their terms.

The methods educators of young children use when they develop a play environment support inquiry investigations. Inquiry is considered the beginning and continuous developmental approach to science understanding. As children move through the continuum of educational experiences, play is often discarded as a "waste of time." It is time educators revisit their approach to teaching science and apply the concepts of play as a pedagogical approach to science teaching. Pedagogical play, based on original and current early childhood programs, may be the venue that narrows the gap in science learning.

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Author contact. ssblake@memphis.edu

Curiosity of the Engaged Child in Nature: A Perfect Fit for Science

Joanna J. Cemore & Denise D. Cunningham
Missouri State University

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity. (Einstein, 1955, as cited in Calaprice, 2000, p. 260)

Curiosity and Engagement

Curiosity is defined as the "desire to know" or an "interest leading to inquiry" (Merriam-Webster, 2008). It is very difficult to teach an apathetic child. On the other hand, a curious child is ready, possibly even running ahead of you, the adult. Are children either curious or not curious? Or is curiosity something we can influence?

We do not create a burning desire for children to know, to inquire, to engage themselves fully in pursuing the act of discovery through worksheets or canned lessons. Children become engaged through their own experiences (Piaget, 1962). We can, however, guide children through experiences and facilitate their theorizing and further questioning. But first, we must begin by letting them experience the world and become engaged in their surroundings. A child can notice and then watch two squirrels playing in the trees for 20 minutes if he has the chance. What are all the thoughts running through that child's mind? Is he just amused? Is he wondering why they chase each other around and around? Or is he noticing that they like to play the game of tag just like he does?

Total engagement occurs in play. Children perform at a much higher level during play than their daily abilities according to Vygotsky (1966). When a child is in play, she enters this state of being, very similar to Csikszentmihalyi's idea of FLOW, where the child is so engaged that she does not notice what else is happening around her (1990). She is operating at her highest ability level and her mind and body are living fully in the moment. What a fantastic state to be in. This is where new ideas emerge and new questions evolve.

"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves" (Jung, 1983, as cited in Moncur, n.d.). With this in mind, wouldn't we as teachers or parents want to provide many opportunities for our children to be engaged, to play with the objects they love, to be curious, to be at their best? Through interviewing children about their play, they often note that outdoor play is their favorite thing to do at school and at home (Godfrey & Cemore, 2005; Cemore, 2001). If they love it, they are motivated to do it. Thus we are more than half way to our goals for children if they are already interested and motivated to "know." This happens most naturally outside.

Nature

Natural habitats are disappearing rapidly--the rainforests are shrinking, the polar icecaps are melting. But it is not only wildlife that is suffering. Also vanishing are the outdoor play areas for our children --their natural habitat. In addition to the physical reduction of outdoor play space, time for outdoor play is also being whittled away.

Why should we be concerned about the lack of time and space for children in their outdoor world? Playing outdoors benefits children in many ways. Sluss (2005) states that outdoor play is unique in that it creates unique environments for learning, provides opportunities to engage in freely chosen play, encourages different levels of social participation as children self-select playmates, develops standards of morality during interactions with peers and more competent others, and encourages physical movement and good health. For the sake of this article, we'll simply focus on the outdoors as *a unique environment for learning.* As discussed by Bilton (2004) the outdoor environment serves different purposes in its uniqueness. A child's environment affects his emotions, behaviors, and his ability to learn. Each child can experience this affect differently. Another reason to play outside is that there is freedom outdoors that one cannot experience inside a classroom plus the unending possibilities that physical movement allows. Outdoor play creates this unique environment with multiple opportunities for many learning domains-including science.

Science

Seeking to understand an unknown world by ways of experimentation, scientists are continually doing the same things that we see young children doing as they play: having insights, asking questions, solving problems, trying out new ideas. Scientists, filled with wonder and curiosity, are constantly puzzling, testing, and probing ideas, just like children. Learning and development is advanced when children meet new and interesting problems and try to solve them. The natural world provides these opportunities.

One key element for children in acquiring science knowledge is active, creative, intellectual engagement (Gallenstein, 2003). Children can develop some complex and varying theories about natural phenomena in their quest to understand the world. The development of a child's theory of the natural world is consistent with what we know about how young children learn. For example, an understanding of physics is developed when a child experiments with rolling various sizes and shapes of stones down a hill or deciding which stone will skip across the water.

This leads us to support children's attempts at theory-building through appropriate, authentic scientific inquiry, including experiential, playful learning at the core.

The importance of experiential learning is not new to education. Nearly a century ago, Dewey (1930) emphasized the importance of actual experience for learning. Not only do children make connections with prior knowledge through active experimentation, they also have new experiences to connect to future information. It is difficult, for example, for a child to understand and enjoy the book *It Looks Like Spilt Milk* (Shaw, 1992) never having gazed into the sky and observed the varying shapes of clouds. Or how could one ever comprehend the humor of *When the Leaf Blew In* (Metzger, Lewis & Lobley, 2006) if they never felt the power of the wind against their bodies? If they have these experiences then these pieces of children's literature come alive.

Interest in science is stimulated by a child's sense of wonder and appreciation of the natural world. There is no substitute. Many science concepts would be lost or unattainable without the first-hand experiences of children interacting and playing in nature. When would airplanes have been invented if children were in classrooms all day and at soccer practice at night? For further innovation in our society children need time and free play to satisfy their curious minds and encourage further creation.

Science content for preschool-age children

A constructivist science curriculum would emphasize four basic areas of science content for young children: physics, chemistry, biology, and ecology (Chaille & Britain, 1996). These align well to the science disciplines identified by the National Science Teachers Association (2008), the National Science Education Standards (2008), and state standards, such as the Missouri Pre-K Science Standards (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008), which include physical science (physics and chemistry), life science (biology), and earth and space (ecology and earth science).

Within these disciplines, constructivists believe *transformation* is a major focus of the child's world and it is a particularly important part of nature. It is hard to think about life science or earth science without having transformation as a major concept. Birth, growth, death, decay and decomposition, changes in substances over time--all these transformations occur in the natural world. Focusing on the physical transformation of objects and materials is comprehensible to young children. It makes sense to them and can later lead to an interest in and understanding of the grown-ups world of physics and chemistry. This is why play, particularly outdoor play, is so important.

Outdoor play provides children with opportunities to experiment with and discover concepts of transformation. Some of the transformation that children engage in is physical; they act to change the shape, form, or substance of materials when they play in the dirt. Some of the transformation is symbolic; children imagine the changes they want as objects "become" other things (the dirt is transformed physically with water and this mud now transforms symbolically into "mud pie"). It must be acknowledged that some transformation experiences can be duplicated in the classroom through a "hands-on" curriculum.

Although constructivist science education has had its advocates for quite some time, many early childhood teachers resist its implementation. It is speculated that this is due to several reasons. First, and most basic, is that constructivist education as a whole is misunderstood with many associated misconceptions (DeVries & Edmiaston, 1998). Secondly, through the supervision of students in various early childhood settings (preschool through third grade), it has become evident that a large proportion of the in-service teachers are uncomfortable with science concepts. Lastly, early childhood teachers, regardless of age/grade, believe that other subject matter is more important to teach. With the recent push for literacy and mathematics readiness in the preschool years, science is often neglected, or at least undervalued.

Educators know that children learn by doing – by manipulating and using real objects and by actively participating in the process of learning. Yet "hands-on" is not enough. Children need to be actively involved in constructing knowledge driven by the child's questions and given considerable access to materials and allowed many choices as to their use. In other words, they need to be hands-on and "minds on."

Play in the natural world provides the perfect curriculum that is driven by children's sense of wonder and curiosity. Nature engages the child and supports the seemingly never-ending questions to be answered and problems to be solved. We cannot leave science learning to chance. Children bring their curiosity. Nature provides the content. The rest is up to us.

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Science and Play: Partners in Constructive Discovery

Patricia Ainsa
University of Texas, El Paso

Play is becoming more important to children as they experience increased pressure to succeed in all areas of life, according to the Association for Childhood Education International (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). The National Association for Education of Young Children declared that play is an important vehicle for children's development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Through play, children construct knowledge of science in a natural, unpressured way.

The social interaction that takes place in play and exploration of science helps children develop perspective taking, reciprocity, and friendship. Projects, which grow out of play, give children a chance to learn about the topic that they would like to explore and to play towards having their questions answered. Early childhood teachers promote social interaction, play, and projects when they give children activity choices and encourage their interests. By providing a wide range of materials and experiences in the play context, and by asking questions, teachers allow children to question deeper and think about the answers to their deep questions. When teachers provide large blocks of time for child oriented play and encourage children to play with ideas, they are promoting the playful side of science inquiry. Creativity and inventiveness happens more readily in a large space filled with a variety of materials. Sometimes a teacher must model how to enter an existing play group and encourage children to plan what they will play or explore. Other times, spontaneity is the best leader of the investigative play. In keeping with the scientific requirement, it is important to provide follow-up discussions after play and help children determine why things happened as they did. Children like to ask questions and find answers right away in order for them to reach conclusions and make sense of their world. If the questions are not answered immediately, children will construct their own answers or beliefs. Using constructive curriculum and play, children, teachers, and parents can use authentic tasks, choice, and decision making to help children develop answers to their questions and help children develop thinking skills.

Science processes--observing, inferring, classifying, and communicating--facilitate children's learning to solve problems, create hypotheses, collect information, and reach conclusions. When children observe, they use as many senses as possible. When playing, they try to identify parts of an object and look at it from all angles. As teachers, we can help them stay focused on the observation activity, contrast the item that they are observing with similar and dissimilar objects, and help them relate structure to function. Inferring is based on guesses, hunches, ideas, and judgments. There are many opportunities for children to classify as they play anywhere in the environment. The last and most important skill is communicating. Social interaction skills are a major part of play when children communicate about their scientific thoughts and discoveries (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1994).

Children's understanding of biological and physical sciences develops gradually as stages of children's thinking develops. Animism and artificialism are terms that Piaget used to demonstrate that young children attribute life to anything that has an activity or function of any sort. Children in the first stage (ages 6-7) believe that objects have force. According to children, objects move because of will power and desire. To offer a personal example, when my young daughter was playing on a ranch in Texas, she caught her foot between two bars of a cattle guard in the road. She could not free her shoe from the cattle guard. She cried, "Mom, it thinks I'm a cow." In her mind, she thought that the cattle guard was alive and out to catch anything in the road that it "thought" was a cow. She feared that she was in trouble!

From six to eight years of age, children think that anything that moves has life. Even mechanical movement is mistaken for biological life. According to this age group, if something moves spontaneously, it has life. Children younger than eleven or twelve years believe that all objects are here for a reason and that we have something in common with all objects, and further, that objects are here for our purposes. Since children's thinking develops progressively, the play episodes are familiar and interesting and help them relate new content to past experiences.

Science play can take in the areas of botany, biology, earth, and physics. Botany is about the study of plants and zoology. Plants are fascinating to children. In an early stage of play, planting seeds and watering the plants are activities that three year olds may enjoy to start to use their observation skills. Children older than four have a basic understanding of the relationship between seeds and the plant cycle and can understand what is happening when they see seeds that are sprouting.

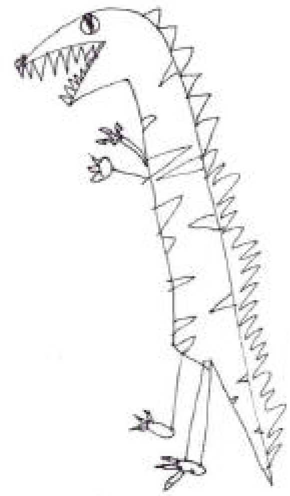
Biology is learned through play with animals and insects. Children playing with pets learn about living organisms. Part of the focus of play should be learning how to care for life and how to respect all living things. It is important for children to learn all about the importance of life. Thinking about the meaning of life can help them develop an ability to learn about all of the complicated aspects that are difficult to understand, like death, sex, illnesses, and the cycles of life.

The physical sciences explore nature and the universe. They are astronomy, chemistry, meteorology and physics. Children have creative theories involving the study of the heavenly bodies and their motion. They can observe the patterns of movement of the moon and stars and make observations and inferences about space. Space play is usually motivated by the media that children are exposed to on television and in the movies. Meteorology is the study of weather and the atmosphere. Weather changes often determine the location of children's play. Chemistry is the study of the properties of materials and the changes that occur in materials. Some children think that magic and human effort cause change. Clear, age-appropriate explanations should always accompany experimental playing, with a strong focus on safety and supervision. Playing with shadows is a way of introducing children to changes that happen during the day.

Physics is the study of matter and energy. Physics demonstrations consist of doing things, lighting or heating things, listening to things, and finding out how things react on land and water and in the air. Earth science is the study of soil, rocks and water. Here is an example that worked successfully in a classroom. Sand play, with a roller paint pan, sand, and a liter of water, yielded the following scientific discovery: The children packed soil into the roller pan. They poured the liter of water in slowly and observed how and where it went. They were then able to identify the stream (how) and the pond (where). The simple experimental play mesmerized the kindergartners and they were eager to draw what they had observed (Turner, 2007).

Oftentimes, literature is a good beginning for play and science. A third grade teacher shares this story. "The first thing I do is start by reading 'Bartholomew and the Oobleck' by Dr. Seuss. Then we start talking with the kids about whether Oobleck is solid or liquid. They start predicting as I am reading. I have Oobleck all prepared for them. To make Oobleck, mix water, starch, and green food coloring. Mix it well then you let it sit for a little while. I ask the children just to observe and tell me if it is a solid or a liquid. They always predict that it is liquid. Then I ask them to stick their finger in Oobleck really fast. They cannot do so because it's very hard. So then they change their prediction to solid. Then I let them stick their hand in there very slowly and their hand sinks into Oobleck. Then they want to change their prediction to liquid again. We talk about states of matter and we come to the conclusion that it is both" (Medrano, 2007).

Through science and play, children demonstrate how content is integrated in their thinking. Curriculum integration occurs during play while science curriculum is connected to the play within a project. Through play and experimentation, children learn how things work, as well as how to express feelings and monitor their behavior. Interactive science museums understand these needs and learning styles in children, as well as the content of science, and the community. Science centers, museums, and interesting places where children can observe and interact with science can be helpful resources incorporating play in interactions. These and other academic and socioemotional objectives are all achieved through play (Branscombe, Castle, Sunbeck, Dorsey, & Taylor, 2003). Taking risks and creating something new is the goal of early childhood science. Most often, that is also the goal of children's play.



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Author contact: tainsa@utep.edu

New Documentary Film on Children's Play!

Where Do the Children Play?" is a new PBS documentary about the vital importance of open-ended creative play for the healthy development of children--and why it is disappearing. Experts like Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg (author of the AAP clinical report on play) and Richard Louv (*Last Child in the Woods*) offer eloquent testimony, but most persuasive are children themselves, playing and talking about their lives.

Screening this film is a great way to spark discussion of what's happening to play in homes, schools and communities. Already over 150 screenings have been organized. To arrange a screening, e-mail the Alliance for Childhood: pam@allianceforchildhood.org. For a list of upcoming screenings across the country and other information about the film, see www.allianceforchildhood.org.

You can also encourage your local PBS affiliate to air the film. Find contact information at www.pbs.org/stationfinder/index and call the program director. Let her know that you are a regular viewer and would like to see the film aired. Direct her to www.wfum.org/childrenplay for more information.

"Where Do the Children Play?" was produced by PBS affiliate WFUM in Michigan, directed by award-winning documentarian Christopher Cook, and originated with the work of Elizabeth Goodenough of the University of Michigan. Outreach for the film is being conducted by the Alliance for Childhood. It is well worth checking it out!

Play, Policy, and Practice Interest Forum News: State PPP Interest Forums Coming to YOU!

The opportunities afforded to us as NAEYC Interest Forums are enormous. AND, it takes a huge effort by all of us to build this.

Let me illustrate the life cycle to date of the PLAY, POLICY AND PRACTICE INTEREST FORUM. We were all excited about the new opportunities afforded us by creating a learning community on the WEB Site. We, as a group, have the goal of communicating the importance of play to all 110,000 members. A big task particularly since we relied on three major ways of communicating with the 110,000 members initially:

? The National NAEYC Annual Conference;

? A business meeting reviewing what we had accomplished for the year and planning of the submission a month later the following year's Conference proposals including sponsoring a HANDS-ON PLAY and RESEARCH workshop;

? Planning the publication for the year of the PLAY, POLICY AND PRACTICE CONNECTION publication – themes and authors.

Three years ago we wanted to interface with the NAEYC WEB Site and the new structure of Interest Forums. The Play Interest Forum members agreed that if we were to be successful in reaching out to all members, we needed to work more closely with State and Local AEYC Affiliates.

We began in New England, where we conducted annual play symposia under the leadership of Bill Strader at the New England Regional Conference. When the Florida State AEYC heard about the successes and the frustrations that were encountered on the local level, a small group representing several states and a critical mass of Floridians as well as representation from New England planned a one day play conference in sunny Florida. As a group we agreed that Florida ECA Board members had to become part of the planning and implementation process if it were to succeed. The state wide Florida Fall Conference featured a full day focus on play. Part of the conference focused on the theory and practice of play and a second layer of the conference focused on advocacy and how to overcome the information gap of research findings and how the state affiliate could bring about change.

The group developed a first draft of a mission statement that was presented to the Florida Early Childhood Association State Board. After discussions the Board adopted the Mission Statement and approved a special budget to create a Play, Policy and Practice Interest Forum for the state of Florida. The cast of characters came from both within the state and supporters from other state units (New Mexico, Missouri, Massachusetts and Rhode Island) who wanted to assist but also learn of how to take back to their own units the learnings derived from the Florida experience.

As a result of this forward movement the National PPP/Interest Forum WEB site has benefited. The Play, Policy and Practice Connection publication is now available on line. We have begun to integrate ways of linking to the State PPP Interest Forums (click here to see the Missouri illustration: (http://pppif.homestead.com/index.html). Of course this is a new beginning for all of us. We are confident as we learn more about the many possibilities the integration and use of the WEB site will increase. Should you want more information please write to me or join us in November at our Business Meeting at the NAEYC annual conference.

Ed Klugman (atakara@aol.com)