



Types of Play in the Lives of Children

Dr. William H. Strader, Ed.D



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Types of Play

As a leading manufacturer of early childhood education play environments, we believe strongly that children of all ages should have access to playgrounds that are safe and encourage the social, emotional, language, cognitive, motor, and physical skill development in children. Explore the types of play and learn how you can implement these principles into your play environment with the guidance and expertise of our expert, Dr. William H. Strader, Ed.D.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Strader, Ed.D

Dr. William H. Strader, Ed.D., Professor of Early Childhood Education, brings over 20 years of expertise to Grounds For Play. As a consultant and a trusted advisor, Dr. Strader works in conjunction with our staff and educates them on leading methods to bring education and play into the designs of our playgrounds. As an advisor, Dr. Strader can provide professional reviews for Grounds For Play designs to meet or exceed age appropriate play environments.

With a Master of Education and a Doctorate of Education, he held positions at various colleges and universities within the Departments of Education. His distinguished career began as an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education at Fitchburg State College. Previously he held adjunctive faculty positions with Cape Cod Community College, the Community College of Rhode Island, and Fisher College at New Bedford, Brockton, and North Attleboro sites. Dr. Strader was given an adjunctive appointment with Brown University, and taught with Bay State College, Boston.

In addition to teaching, Dr. Strader was Coordinator for the Institute for Early Childhood Leadership and Professional Development at Johnson & Wales University. There he developed, designed and implemented the Masters of Education (M.Ed.) in Early Childhood Administration and Leadership. Additional accolades include:

- Former chair, Department of Early Childhood Education at Hesser College
- Former president of the Board of Directors, Options for Working Families of the Childcare Resource & Referral Services for the State of Rhode Island
- Faculty advisor for various Early Childhood Clubs including Hesser College, Mitchell College, and Fitchburg State College
- Co-Chaired the Curriculum Assessment Committee, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standard Five, Faculty Committee and was a member of the NEASC Steering Committee for Hesser College
- And more!

Dr. Strader was one of the first Cohort members of LinkedIn, and presently is a Facebook Blogger for the Share Our Strength Foundation's, No Kid Hungry Program. Founder of the Student Interest Forum of NAEYC Facebook Page, and current Administrator for the Facebook Page: "Future Leaders in Early Childhood Education: College & University Students" as well as his own Facebook Page related to play: New England Symposium On Play.

Dr. Strader is involved with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as a founding facilitator for the Student Interest Forum, a member of the NAEYC Play, Policy and Practice Interest Forum, and the Men in Early Childhood Education Interest Forum. He has held the position of President of the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, President of the Montacuset Association for the Education of Young Children (North Central Massachusetts). With his experience and specific discipline in early childhood education, Dr. Strader's involvement with Grounds For Play continues to make GFP the leading early childhood play environment expert. With his input, our play environments are ensured to be designed to incorporate education, play, and safety.



CHAPTER 1

Age-Appropriate Play

Play is a major interactive process through which children learn about themselves, their environment, the other people in that environment, and the interrelationship among all of these.

-EDGAR KLUGMAN & LYN FASOLI

This article focuses on exploring children's development with age ranges starting at six to twenty-three month (infants and toddlers), two to five years (preschool aged children) and children ages five to twelve (latency age and pre-adolescence).

Why is age-appropriate play important?

When we look at the developing child and the various ages and stages of development, play is key to their emerging sense of self, other, and the environment. Infants, toddlers, preschool and school age children all grow and develop over time with tremendous potential and opportunity. These opportunities are found in creativity and self-expression, connections to others, building, maintaining, and sharing play experiences, and coming to know more about themselves and the world around them, all which are at the heart of play.

Age-appropriate play focuses more specifically on the developmental ages and the general guidelines for safe, appropriate and stimulating play equipment, as seen in the Public Playground Safety Handbook created by U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Grounds For Play is at the very heart of age-appropriate opportunities through the materials, equipment and play opportunities they provide, all which will be explored in this article. It is clear that the Grounds For Play philosophy, mission, and basic premise clearly seek to incorporate a strong developmental and play-based focus not only for normal needs children but also those children who may need special approaches to learning and play.

"Play is a need of every child. Children virtually overflow with all the prerequisites for play...a vast reservoir of energy and curiosity, exceedingly new experiences, ripe ideas, and a rich supply of imagination that pours forth freely as a constant stream of activity...play is an important childhood activity that helps master all developmental needs." -George Maxim

How Age-Appropriate Play is Central to Children’s Overall Development

The Public Standards for Playgrounds categorizes child development from infancy to school age children into four categories: infants, toddlers, preschool, and school age.

INFANTS (6 MONTHS-23 MONTHS)

When we look at the developing infant by the time she reaches the age of six months, she has the ability to sit while supported and has developed her grasp, allowing her to explore materials by looking, smelling, touching, mouthing, and even banging her toys in play. She explores the world through all perceptual equipment — smell, touch, taste, sight, feel, sound — and explores with an eye on self and other, such as mom, dad, other children, and caregivers. She can express a range of emotions and can demonstrate her joy in discovery with utterances — gurgling, cooing, laughing, crying, pouting, and showing frustration or anger — approximating what will later be speech and language. She will continue to grow, moving toward her independence, by creeping, crawling, sitting on her own, and developing an increase in her eye-hand coordination and grasp.

This infant girl, who moves forward in age, will work with support. By about 15 months old, she will walk independently — get ready for the two’s! Her fine and gross motor skills will increase and she can open containers with lids, throw objects, stack objects, and knock things down with great delight! She enjoys sounds, music and rhythms, and can demonstrate her movement with music. By 15 to 18 months old, she is walking without falling, sitting herself in a chair, holding onto objects, beginning to scribble and make marks on paper. She will demonstrate her ability to turn pages in books and point out pictures. She can build with blocks, distinguish differences and similarities, and is now expressing herself in basic words, emotional expressions and mimicked forms of speech.

PRESCHOOL (2 YEARS-5 YEARS)

The preschool child is more ambulatory and engaged in discovering the world around her. She now has greater awareness of self and others, her body in space, and both her fine and gross motor skills are continuing to grow. She can throw a ball, negotiate obstacles, run, and her eye-hand coordination continues to become more solid. She puts together and takes apart simple puzzles, identifies objects, colors and shapes, distinguishes sizes, climbs, hops, skips, jumps, and show greater agility as she moves toward 5 years of age. She is aware of numbers, letters, and abstractions and can distinguish between numbers, letters, shapes and other symbols. As she continues to grow, she can play in a more social and cooperative play setting with small groups of children.

The preschool child moves from concrete thinking towards more abstract and complex thinking, memory, greater language and vocabulary acquisition are building, and opportunities for socio-dramatic and imaginative play increase, as well as play with others. She will demonstrate her likes and dislikes, preferences, and her understanding of emotions and the expression of emotions. Her fine and gross motor skills and artistic self-expression grows as her ability to work with a variety of art materials is evident in her opportunities for coloring, painting, and drawing.

SCHOOL AGE (5 YEARS-12 YEARS)

The school age child, ages 5-12 years, is now developmentally moving towards greater and greater complex play. Her knowledge, skills, attitudes and emotions will now be focused in a more structured academic setting in elementary school. This structured learning environment will shape and influence the child’s ability and approaches to play. The rigors of the academic curriculum will require this child to focus on routines, rules, and working in teams, small groups and whole class academic activity. All of her developmental domains will be fully active and operating, in addition to her emerging sense of community, individual, cooperative learning, and values. She will spend anywhere from 35 to 55 hours in a school environment depending on the child, the family, or school system. She may leave school to attend after school programs until early evening.

School age or elementary school children (now ages 5-12) will continue to grow in all developmental domains with the

addition of values of self and others. For the next seven years she will spend hours in various classroom settings. She will acquire more physical skills, including balance, strength, agility and coordination, building both her fine and gross motor skills, in turn setting the stage for her reading, writing, mathematical and scientific reasoning abilities. She will build friendships, understand her place in group learning settings, individual learning and team work.

“You see a child play, and it is so close to seeing an artist paint, for in play a child says things without uttering a word. You can see how he solves his problems. You can also see what’s wrong. Young children, especially, have enormous creativity, and whatever’s in them rises to the surface in free play.” -Erik Erikson

How Grounds For Play Products Provide Age-Appropriate Opportunities for Infants, Toddlers, Preschool and School Aged Children

In this section, we will explore a few of the Grounds For Play’s diverse resources that support age-appropriate play opportunities for the various age groups.

Very young children are exploring the world through all of their senses – their perceptual field equipment of sight, touch, taste, hearing, smell and, of course, movement. Once the child can crawl, pull to a stand, and begin to walk, the world is a brand new place to explore, discover, uncover and celebrate! Grounds For Play’s infant spaces are filled with colors, shapes, sound makers, spinners, and mirrors, all elements that attract the eye and ask the child to “come play!” Infant Activity Centers can provide the option of being fully enclosed or opened with a removable gate, expanding an infant’s play and discovery space.

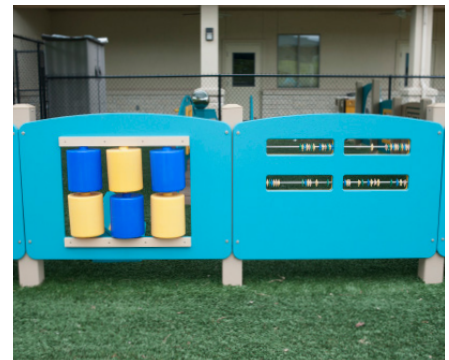
Infants and toddlers can move, discover, and explore on their own and with other children in Infant Exploratoriums. Blocks, shapes, beads, mirrors, textures, water table play and free exploration are set up in ways that are attractive and engaging. Fine and gross motor skills and cooperative and social play emerge in the Exploratorium spaces. As the very young child grows, she has opportunities to build her climbing skills, interacting with others, and enjoying her new found “heights” with Grounds For Play’s Adventures in Growing series.



The Step Activity Center allows a child to develop gross motor and fine motor skills.



The Toddler Tower allows a child to explore and interact.



Panels that contain spinners and beads offer free exploration and engage a child’s fine motor skills.

The preschool child is now actively engaged and all developmental domains are being utilized to explore and discover the world and each other. Self-awareness and others become more and more complex. They are full of emotions, language, and social interactions. The opportunities for children’s physical play will continue to be engaged, allowing Grounds For Play’s climbers, play structures, bridges, crawl tubes, and activity exploration panels to give children ideal play-based exploration and learning. Furthermore, great dramatic play options, such as playhouses, cars, trains, and even helicopters, allow for self-expression and play-based learning. Emerging literacy, words, and symbols and other cognitive abstract constructs can be seen in the preschool child. Grounds For Play provides increasing opportunities for children to build their language arts skills and abilities through their activity panels that incorporate symbols, letters, words.



The preschool child's opportunities for physical play grow with their developing bodies.



Dramatic play opportunities allow for self-expression and play-based learning.



Increasing opportunities for children to build their language skills can be found on the playground.

The school age child benefits from Grounds For Play structures and play spaces that increase their cooperative play, social interactions, physical skills, and abilities. Children at this age are now looking at play environments that allow for games and give them the opportunity to play with others. More advanced thinking, expansive language use, and the desire to play and interact with others is much more “on their radar”. Motor coordination, both fine and gross, will continue to be refined as the children continue to grow and develop over the next several years. Grounds For Play equipment allows for children to explore, discover, and engage in direct involvement with their play environment. Items such as the balance beam, climbing ladders, and overhead ladders all require eye-hand coordination, manual dexterity, balance, and coordination. Sports and cooperative team games are also important at this age. Items such as Grounds For Play’s basketball goals, tether balls, four square decal, hopscotch, and bean bag toss all provide opportunities for team play.



Hand-eye coordination continues to grow and develop.



Children at this age are able to explore, engage in, and understand the concept of creating music.



A child of this age will enjoy play environments that give the opportunity to engage in activities with other children.

“If we have cultivated the art of play early in our lives, we are likely to hold onto our self-initiating behaviors, our capacity for risk-taking, our inventiveness as adults.” ~Selma Wasserman

The examples provided give a clear indication that Grounds For Play has a strong early childhood education and developmental focus, speaking to the rich and interesting play creations and play environments that touch all of the developmental domains of social, emotional, language, motor, cognitive, and values related to cooperative and collaborative play. In a Grounds For Play play environment, children are actively exploring and interacting with each other, the play environment, and equipment. Interesting and engaging play spaces for children off developmental ages are very much at the heart of Grounds for Play equipment and play environments.



CHAPTER 2

Dramatic Play

I know! Let's not make cakes anymore. Let's make candy!"

Greg, age three, in the outside sand area of the child development center.

Dramatic play, sociodramatic play, symbolic play, creative dramatics, make believe play, role play are often mentioned as we explore the phenomena of children playing together. They often use a variety of props, materials, and interactions to explore, define and recreate worlds for their pleasure, laughter and the ability to play together. This play brief discusses the importance of dramatic play and how it impacts children's learning, growing and becoming.

The developing child has all of the wonderful complex structures and, developmental domains, such as motor development, language development, cognitive development, social development, emotional development and values. All of these domains are in full swing, in dramatic play. Joan Isenberg and Mary Jalongo, in their work "Creative Expression in Play in Early Childhood" said:

"In dramatic and sociodramatic play children can be both actors and directors. As actors, children experience the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of the roles they are playing. As directors, they imagine the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with a role and coach the actors. Playing both roles in dramatic and sociodramatic play helps children:

- *Construct their own understanding of how the world works by stepping into the shoes of another person.*
- *Act out social situations requiring negotiation with players with different needs and views.*
- *Express their inner feelings*
- *Communicate in meaningful ways and develop social skills by negotiating roles, locating props, and agreeing on a common theme.*
- *Develop the confidence to explore freely and imaginatively the structured forms of drama."*

(Isenberg & Jalongo, 181)

It's a sugary day!"

Twins Krissy and Karen (age four) talking to a teacher on the inside living room dramatic play loft, Child Development Center.

There is a common element between early childhood education programs, Head Start, child care, family child care facilities, kindergartens as well as after school programs, we notice something in common, a dramatic play area with child sized, kitchen sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, kitchen tables, chairs, costumes, mirrors, baby dolls and soft plush animals. Why? What is so valuable about this particular area within the early childhood curriculum, that they would invest in this type of materials, resources and funds to equip a space within the classroom for dramatic play? In their

work entitled "Pretend Play Training and Its outcomes", Saltz and Saltz said:

"Children's pretend play requires that children's social and cognitive skills are such that they can transform their reality and experiences, as well as symbolic transformations (a toy block becomes an airplane, a toy rubber duck becomes a sailboat). Pretend play is heightened by the use of toy objects that are familiar and similar to the actual objects, feeding the baby doll with a toy baby bottle. Calling home to talk to their Mom or Dad, on the play phone and have a discussion about food and recipes, etc.

Spontaneous social pretend play (we will use the term dramatic play) has been seen to impact children's social, linguistic and cognitive skills). The works of both Piaget and Vygotsky strongly suggest that pretend play has a strong link to cognition."

I know! You can be the dog, now get over there, lay down and be quiet! I'll bring you food!"

Nakiesha, age four, in the outside dramatic play area.

Another aspect of dramatic play in children is taking on various roles. When children are truly engaged in dramatic play, they try out new roles and ideas real or created related to who they are as players. Those roles show the emotions, language and what behavior they are supposed to enact. This also brings out social, emotional, and language components as well as motor skills and how the children are "supposed" to act in this play opportunity. Frost, Wortham and Reifel state,

"Sociodramatic play is the most advanced form of social and symbolic play. In sociodramatic play, children carry out imitation and dramatic and fantasy play together. Sociodramatic play involves role playing, in which children imitate real-life people and experiences that they have had themselves. Make-believe is also a component because it serves as an aid to imitation. It allows the children to represent real-life events and includes their imaginations in carrying out their roles." The child's abilities in sociodramatic play improve with experience, and, as the child plays with different children, play becomes more varied to include new interpretations and ideas."

Lloyd! Let's be rocket ships when the teacher says the hill is open and we can fly up to the tree!"

David, age five, at the cubbies of the URI Child Development Center, waiting to go outside.

Elements to consider as children prepare and engage in dramatic play:

1. Children try taking on real or imaginary roles such as TV, movie, characters animals, superheroes, supervillains by doing so, they ask themselves, "Who am I in dramatic play?"
2. They develop fine motor skills by putting on costumes, buttons, clips, and hats, shoes, boots and tying shoe laces.
3. They develop gross motor skills by running, hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing, etc.
4. Children engage in cooperative play by sharing and being with others.
5. Sharing and Being with Others
6. Perspective taking takes place.
7. Children become more aware of diversity.
8. Language use, vocabulary building, exposure to new words and terms occur.
9. Creative self-expression as well as creative thinking occur.
10. Symbols and other abstractions are learned.
11. Problem identifying as well as problem solving techniques are developed.

12. Notions of self and other (friends, companions, buddies) are developed.
13. Children's ability to express emotions are developed.
14. Role assignments such as, "you be the cat and I'll come and feed you." are explored.

As the coordinator for the New England Symposium on Play, I have had the honor to explore, create, design and provide a wide variety of presentations for my New England education counterparts who are advocates for the importance of play in the lives of children. We continue to support the notion that children learn best through direct involvement with self, others and a rich environment that says, "Come play, explore, create, develop, grow, experiment, learn and share." Dramatic play, sociodramatic play, creative dramatics, interactive play, make believe play or just play are critical to the healthy growth and development of children.

I believe that Grounds for Play is instrumental in setting the stage, preparing the opportunities and laying the ground floor for children's imaginative and dramatic play opportunities with a rich variety of place spaces that entice, engage and invite our children to come and play! Let's have a look and see what kinds of dramatic play spaces they have for children's self-expression and dramatic play opportunities.



This child is involved with trying on adult life – "Filler up please."



These children are involved in language, communication and even economics – "That will be two dimes, a nickel and three pennies, please!"



All aboard the U.S.S. Ferry! We can see language, pretend play and trying on roles – "I'm Captain Lee!"

Dramatic Play Themes

Grocery store, gas station, restaurant, library, ice-cream shop, flower shop, post office, bank, boat (sail, power, row), airplane, train, park, zoo, museum, airport, space ship, submarine, lake, ocean, shore, beach, underwater park, aquarium, house, apartment, fire station, police station, military post, and college/university, gym.



CHAPTER 3

Sensory Play

A young toddler moves over to a print of mother and baby that is placed at the baby's level behind Plexiglas. The child moves over toward the picture and pulls herself upright to look at the picture. She smiles, coos, and pats the print of the mother and baby. Then she turns to the caregiver, points, and smiles.

Our Senses: Windows to the World of Play

Babies come into the world with all of their sensory equipment and ready to experience all the sights, sounds, smells, touch, and tastes that their world will provide. In infancy, neonatologists examine and test to make sure all of the sensory modalities are operational and emerging, because the basic instinctual sensory mechanisms in infancy (such as crying, following objects with their eyes, etc.) are critical. These initial infant motor functions and reflexes assure us that their sensory “equipment” is there and active. Children’s eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin are remarkable tools. Their sensory systems are complex in their operations and critical to their overall health as they develop and grow.

The clinical psychologist and epistemologist, Jean Piaget, centered much of his initial theoretical cognitive theory with the cognitive stages of sensorimotor development. This emerging developmental stage utilized the developing child’s sensory input in all modalities along with the importance of motor functions and muscular development leading to both gross motor and fine motor development within the context of emerging exploration and play.

All Play Includes Sensory Input

From dramatic and physical play to musical and nature play, all forms of play include sensory input. As children play, they develop important sensory abilities including sight, smell, touch, and taste. Research can be found about the importance of sensory play from various fields including but not limited to the medical field, physical education, therapy and counseling, education, etc. Educational proponents of art, music, and dance intuitively know the importance of sensory exploration and play within their respective disciplines.

Sensory Play in Action

Exploration, Experimentation, and Creative Expression with Big Blue Blocks

Let's explore sensory play in a "hands-on, minds-on" approach to Big Blue Blocks! These manipulative blocks by Grounds For Play offer children the opportunity to explore space, size, texture, sound, color, as well as weight, height, and circumference. Individual exploration and experimentation, stacking, building, deconstructing and rebuilding, reshaping and recreating new phenomena are often seen as the children build, rebuild, and tear down their creations. Eye-hand coordination, balance, and observation of and greater interactions and experimentation occur with the diversity of size blocks. In this example utilizing Big Blue Blocks, the children focus on size, shape, texture, and feel. Square, circle, triangle, rectangle, trapezoid, as well as variations of circular shaped interconnecting tubes provide an interesting variation of "just stacking". The sense of number, amount, shape, size, texture, potential interaction, cooperation, and sharing can be seen with Big Blue Blocks!



Big Blue Blocks Curves Set



Big Blue Blocks Set of 105



Big Blue Blocks Angles Set

Nature and Manipulative Bark-On Blocks



The Bark-On Blocks can provide a wide variety of opportunities for direct exploration and play. Children build and utilize a variety of natural manipulative exploration with Bark-On Blocks. It is interesting to note that these materials all provide a sense of the round, circular, and flat surfaces which can be constructed in a variety of ways. Children will explore and learn about different aspects about height, length, circumference, size as well as different textures such as smooth, hard, and rough. Some complementary and supplemental nature and sensory

play items include the Faux Log, Faux Log Tunnel, Faux Log Stump, Log Steps, Natural Balance Beam, Cedar Bench, and Natural Log.

Sensory Play with the Sand and Water Station

The Sand and Water Station provides children with a tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learning experience as well as the understanding pour-able water and sand can be used on their own or combined. This station allows children to explore the various aspects of the qualities and attributes of liquids and solids. Questions, observations, hypothesis, and experimentation are readily available using water tables. The Sand and Water Station can provide a variety of explorative ventures utilizing various combinations of liquids and semi-solid materials.



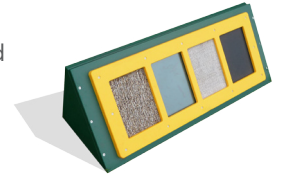
Babel Drum



The Babel Drum allows children to explore sound, smooth texture, and visual appeal in terms of shape. The tonal qualities of this drum help children experiment with different rhythms and beats while playing with or without mallets. Children who engage in musical play develop better sensory skills, listening skills, coordination, and cognitive development.

Texture Box

Just as it sounds, the Texture Box provides opportunities for tactile exploration and play. It includes four different touch panels with distinct textured surfaces: carpet, artificial turf, textured plastic, and lexan. These textures help children develop their senses of touch, sight, and smell while they play and explore.



Sensory Play and the Outside World

Early childhood education and early childhood program settings speak to sensory play in the design of outdoor play environments. An effective play environment allows children to freely explore and create their own learning through classroom materials, resources, guided exploration, and the opportunity to play alone and with others. As children enter the elementary school environment, a more structured perspective is present and often times a more rigorous curriculum and required schedule is provided and adhered to. Greater required expectations, testing, evaluation, and assessments place an ever increasing demand on the teaching staffs. While opportunities for sensory play is still present, it is often times placed in more subtle opportunities. The opportunity to freely explore play and utilize all sensory modalities become more selective within the structure of the elementary school day. In some schools, a total allocation of 40 minutes is allotted for both lunch and recess, therefore it may become a race to provide both a comfortable lunch period and recess time.

There is an increased demand for academic performance, outcome-based evaluations and assessments, standardized testing, grade level testing, mandated state and federal testing, and increased perspectives on accountability and data-driven orientations. Is 20 minutes sufficient to get several classes into and out of lunch, bathroom breaks, and recess before making it back to class?

Outdoor play provides children with the freedom to choose their play, choose their play materials, play partners, and experiences that support their play. Is 20 minutes sufficient for children to become engaged, relaxed, happy, and joyful for their own time to play? Limited time means limited play, and limited play means limited sensory exploration and discovery. Sensory play includes all of the developmental domains; which includes social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, motoric, and even values.

What solutions can we recommend for this? How do we value play in the development of children? When does play stop? When should play stop? Questions that are critical for us to continue to explore, research, and confirm that play has value, meaning, and is relevant for the development all human beings.



CHAPTER 4

Physical Play

Physical Play in the Lives of Children

WILLIAM H. STRADER, ED.D.

One potato, two potato, three potato, more! David, you and Eunhee are IT! Everybody run!

Physical play in children — this means running, hopping, skipping, jumping, dancing, creeping, crawling, rolling, tumbling, and of course laughing, giggling, guffawing, chuckling and smiling! Over the past eight months, I have had the honor of being part of 6- and 7-year-old children's outdoor play at an elementary school. Over 60 girls and boys quietly walk down the school halls to the outdoor play environment. They are quiet and walking single file past the second grade rooms, first grade rooms and kindergarten rooms. One child, Charlotte, even asks if she can hold open the door when the children go out. The doors open and...

In this article, we will explore the growth and development of young children and their emerging sense of wonder, excitement, language, physical, and motor and their exploration of the world through physical play.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes!

Physical play in children (defined as girls and boys from infants through twelve years of age) needs to be thought of in terms of their physical motor constructs, their perceptual field equipment, their interactions in their environment and, of course, their maturation and growth over time. Sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, and movement are all initial play equipment in children. How does the child come to know, to understand, to relate, to interact and to explore the world around them? My colleagues who are occupational therapists and physical therapists talk about the concept of sensory integration, the blending and interaction of sensory field equipment such as a child's eyes, ears, noses, mouth, skin, motor skills and their ability to move and explore the world around them. A child's interactions with their world, their personal interactions with others and the environment will have a key role in the developing brain, the synthesis of the spoken word, and their movement from concrete object explorations to eventual symbolic thinking, language acquisition and more advanced thinking, feeling, knowing and understanding of the world around them. It is through the wonderful opportunities of physical play that we see their emerging sense of self and other.

The work of Jean Piaget, who was considered one of the preeminent research theorists in child development, focused on cognitive development. His perspectives and stage development theory focused on how children come to know,

to understand and learn about the world. His works included the direct exploration and discovery of the world around them through what he termed sensorimotor development, the use of all of the senses in conjunction with the emerging connections to fine and gross motor abilities to frame one's thinking, knowing, and experiencing the world. These experiences will lead to the connection to language and identifying objects, identifying significant others and the world by experiences, interactions and connections that stimulate one's curiosity and wanting to know.

Grounds For Play climbers provide a variety of interesting ladders that allow child to be challenged to climb, discover, and identify a variety of objects. Such climbers include our Shape Climber, Tower Climber, Bubble Climber, Loop Climber, and Horseshoe Climber.

Sean, come on! We have to get the swings before anyone else gets them!"

Emerging gross and fine motor skills, the building of neural interconnections and greater brain capacity, are present as the child moves from infancy through age 6. Let's go back to the first grade recess and playground. What are they doing? What knowledge, skills and aptitudes are present in children who are now six and seven years of age? Are these children spread out across the entire play space, playing alone in their own spaces? Hardly! I have observed that children generally play with other as they jump rope, play soccer or basketball, swing, and climb outdoor play equipment.

The overhead elements and connecting structures appear to be appealing to children as they try to get from one point to another, such as when playing "alligator" where if a child touches the ground they will get "chomped." Grounds For Play structures provide children with both fine and gross motor skill opportunities to swing and move from right to left and left to right as they create courses for themselves.

Ice cream soda, cherry on the top

Who's your Girl- /boyfriend?

I forgot!

A, B, C, D, E, F, G!..

-Jump Rope Song

Today the children were outside in the very expansive play environment. Several children were on the swings, some on the climber, and five or six children drew and discussed their sidewalk chalk creations. I was honored to be the person to hold the rope as one of the turners in a game of Jump Rope. We had to practice turning the rope as the children tended to move away from where they stood and began creating a smaller and smaller arc for the jumper to jump through. We also needed to practice turning the rope both too fast and too slow without moving around and tripping the jumper. Additionally, we listened to the jumper's request for jump rope songs. Let's look at this simple physical play activity in another way. As developmentalists, we observe and take note of the following: language use and development, problem identifying and solving, fine and gross motor coordination, comradery and friendship building. All of these very important developmental activities take into consideration the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and both fine and gross motor domains in their choice of physical play. All of this took place within 15 minutes of the children's outdoor play environment and their selection of what their physical play would encompass.

Grounds For Play's play structures, sport activities and games, in addition to our play environment designs and nature materials and manipulatives, impact all of the elements discussed.

No! It's the monsters under the walls and in the caves!

Run or you'll be captured and put in their dungeon!

As I have observed, interacted, questioned and have been honored to be asked to play with children outside every

day (weather permitting), their creativity, enthusiasm, interests, arguments, conversations and play development has assisted in asking questions about physical play. Two other important perspectives related to physical play include the perspective of a physical education teacher and an occupational therapist. How do these two disciplines, physical education and occupational therapy speak to physical play in children? Physical Education teacher Sarah White and Occupational Therapist Eleanor Ingram assisted in providing their particular focus on what they see as important in Physical Play.



Developmental Milestone: Hand-Eye Coordination, Muscle Development



Developmental Milestone: Climbing, Body Position



Developmental Milestone: Foot-Eye Coordination, Balancing

Sarah White looks at the development of a variety of locomotor skills (movement through space, sharing space, knowing and understanding where they are in relation to each other), such as walking, skipping, hopping, and running. Her work with younger children focuses on the fundamentals and the rudimentary aspects of games and game play. Learning about sportsmanship, being a positive team member, working together, demonstrating cooperative and collaborative interactions, as well as helping others and supporting each other, were key in her views of physical play. Sarah shares an anecdote about one of the fastest children in the class playing with another child who has restrictive mobility due to casts on his legs. They played together in a rousing game of Tag. The very adept runner was well aware of the boy's abilities and made sure that she ran at the pace of the boy but keeping out of range, laughing and teasing each other. "How can we promote a positive play environment in physical education that heightens a sense of community and a sense of 'being a good sport?' I think that physical play allows for this kind of opportunity."

In the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (2014), Watts, Stagnitti and Brown provide a review of sensory processing and play. In their review they investigate the relationship between play and the senses, how play provides the optimal milieu that impacts sensory integration. Eleanor Ingram talks about how physical play provides multiple access for motor planning, problem solving and acquiring additional adaptive skills. The occupational therapist assists in helping children to acquire skills and abilities that can allow the child to increase their comfort level as it relates to motor tasks and motor planning, as well as providing support for the child's emerging sense of comfort as they explore the world through physical play. When a play environment supports sensory exploration and offers problem solving opportunities, the environment can help with a child's vestibular issues and movement and sensory exploration, which in turns increases the child's comfort level.

Duck, duck, duck, duck," goose! Run!"

Physical play impacts all of the sensory field equipment, such as sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell and movement. We use the term fine and gross motor skills as they relate to the child's emerging abilities to play. What is exciting is the fact that Grounds For Play has a central focus on play, and certainly physical play. The diversity of opportunities for physical play as seen in the plethora of play equipment and materials speaks to the heart of physical play. For example, the Grounds For Play Art Studio is an excellent illustration of fine motor skills, handedness, sharing space, and self-expression. The Documentation Panels is a great place to publish, share and enjoy the children's efforts, energies and art. Furthermore, Grounds For Play's nature climbers, nature materials, and play garden add to a child's physical play and self expression.

Here is a list of elements that can be useful as we observe and enjoy physical play:

1. Speech and language
2. Self-awareness
3. Self-concept
4. Understanding the self and other
5. Becoming comfortable with one's body
6. Understanding self in relationship to their environment
7. Handedness
8. Learning physical skills (creeping, crawling, walking, hopping, skipping, jumping, running)
9. Physical growth (height, weight, body image)
10. Overall health
11. Athletic self
12. Physical proficiencies
13. Social interactions
14. Emotional skills and abilities
15. Games with rules



CHAPTER 5

Musical Play

Music in the Lives of Children

WILLIAM H. STRADER, ED.D.

Music is universal. It is a phenomena that excites, saddens, inspires, frightens, and thrills! Throughout a child's life, they are exposed to countless musical experiences that influence the six developmental domains: social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, motor skills, and values. This article explores the remarkable world of music, how music is critical to a child's overall development, and how Grounds For Play encourages development and growth through musical experiences in outdoor play environments.

Musical Influence of Newborns

Musical experiences start to influence the growth and development of children when they are newborns. Why does a mother cuddle and sing to their child? Why do they rock the child and hum little, delicate melodies? Picture this: a mother is rocking her newborn child while singing a nursery rhyme. The baby is soothed, smiles, and looks into his mother's eyes while she continues to hum and sing; the baby reaches up and touches his mother's smiling face. How critical is this parent-child interaction? Just in the illustration above, we see social, emotional, cognitive, motor, and language development. The social connection and emotional connection between the mother and baby can be seen through the physical proximity and visual and physical interactions. Elementary constructs of language, singing, and cognitive elements such as sound, musical tones, and words are also imparted in this example. A child's overall development is impacted by music as an infant and continues to be impacted as they grow older and enter schooling.

Musical Influence of Child Development

"Music is as important as recess, art, movement, and gym. As a matter of fact, all of these other disciplines can be assimilated into music!" said Ariel Templeton, a music educator at Greenfield Middle School in Greenfield, Mass. According to the National Association for Music Education early exposure to music impacts areas of the brain related to language and reasoning. When exposed to music, the left side of the brain is better developed and can more easily imprint information to the brain. This in turn greatly impacts memory and vocabulary. Furthermore, music provides sound pattern, rhythm, and repetition, which increases potential mathematical pattern recognition skills. Sense of rhythm, imagination, and emotions are also impacted. Molly Porter, a music educator and director for Gardner Public Schools in Gardner, Mass., believes that music is a "language of its own." It's universal and includes melody, poetry, and

individual self-expression. As educators, both Templeton and Porter discuss the importance of music classes because musical play leads to creative and mathematical thinking, memorization, and body movements, such as hand clapping and finger snapping.

“OK children, let’s make a circle. Everyone take hands and let’s sing our circle songs. Now, Norberto is new today, so you will have to help him with the words, OK?” said an elementary school teacher. All of the children looked over in Norberto’s direction and he smiled. They sang a few classic children songs such as “If You’re Happy and You Know It” and “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” What are the goals of these songs in a classroom setting? These songs expose children to a mix of diverse rhymes, rhythms, and simple lyrics. Children learn to sing songs so they learn words, rhythms, and tempo. In doing so, we engage children in learning music, which impacts their continued interest and engagement in school and other activities. Those students involved with music education are more likely to not only stay in school, but also excel in the other subject areas well.

Here is a list of 10 popular children’s songs.

At a young age, these songs and stories expose children to music and impact a child’s imagination and curiosity.

1. “Happy Birthday”
2. “Ring Around the Rosies”
3. “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”
4. “London Bridge”
5. “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”
6. “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”
7. “Mary Had a Little Lamb”
8. “Rock-a-Bye Baby”
9. “Five Little Monkeys”
10. “The Hokey Pokey”



Melodious Butterfly



Bongo Panel



Imbarimba

Dr. Ani Patel, professor of psychology at Tufts University, wrote “Music, Language and the Brain”, which raises questions as how music and neuroscience may have an impact on exploring how the brain functions and how more complex structures and mental capacity may indeed have a connection to music. Patel states,

If we know how and why music changes the brain in ways that affect other cognitive abilities, this could have a real impact on the value we put on it as an activity in the schools, not to mention all the impact it has on emotional development, emotional maturity, social skills, stick-to-itiveness, things we typically don’t measure in school but which are highly important in a child’s ultimate success.

Christopher Chau and Theresa Riforgiate in their work, “The Influence of Music on the Development of Children,” share that some researchers and musicians believe that musical ear training may have an impact on reading skills, rhythmic accuracy, musicality, and sight-reading skills. Melissa Locker, in her *Time* article “This is How Music Can Change Your

Brain,” states,

There’s little doubt that learning to play a musical instrument is great for developing brains. Science has shown that when children learn to play music, their brains begin to hear and process sounds that they couldn’t otherwise hear. This helps them develop “neurophysiological distinction” between certain sounds that can aid in literacy, which can translate into improved academic results for kids.

Grounds For Play Encourages Development and Growth Through Musical Play

Just as that mother sang to her baby a little lullaby, children can hear, see, and experience a diversity of music. With the continued support of family, schools, and community, children will continue to learn and make music. Your children can make music by exploring sounds and rhythms through using their hands, feet, and voices as instruments. What if we provided children with musical instruments to explore on a daily basis on their local playground? Let’s now look at the diversity of musical play opportunities that Grounds For Play has to offer.

Rhythm

Very young children start off experimenting with sounds by clapping and moving their bodies, heads, and torsos. Later, they’ll begin snapping their fingers and moving to the rhythm of music. When they become old enough, they can begin using musical instruments to make music. Grounds For Play provides many musical instruments that encourage children to use their hands, fists, palms or fingers. All of the instruments are designed to be accessible to children of all abilities! The Cajon Bongo, Palm Cajon, Jr., Palm Drum, Palm Lap Drum, Single Post Bongo, and Bongo Panel all provide children with the opportunity to engage in a variety of percussive sounds, beats, and rhythms. Children can play off of each other and echo back and forth on the diversity of drums that are available.

Percussion and Musical Notes

A percussion instrument creates sound by being struck or scraped by a mallet or hand. The Bongo Panel, Tuned Drums, and Sing Post Bongos allow children to discover pitch and judge sounds as higher or lower in scale. Grounds For Play’s Akambira, Amadinda, and Metallophone present children with actual note variations; children can play using mallets or even their hands. The Marimba, Imbarimba I, Sound Wave, Rhythm, and the Jamaican Steel Drums provide opportunities to seek out and play different notes. The whimsical Lady Bug Drum also offers interesting sounds and notes.

Musical Notes, Scales, and Harmony

The Piper, Griffin, Merry, and Duet provide your outdoor play environment with a fun musical ensemble. These instruments allow children to experiment with the rich diversity of musical instruments both familiar and exotic. It is clear that Grounds For Play is encouraging musical play in children.

Music starts influencing children’s lives as newborns and continues as they grow and become school-aged children. With the help of Grounds For Play products, you can incorporate musical instruments into your outdoor play environment to help children develop social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, motor skills, and values.



CHAPTER 6

Nature Play

Nature Play in the Lives of Children

WILLIAM H. STRADER, ED.D.

Sticks, stones, bugs and worms!

Nature play is such a natural occurring part of children's lives. Open the door to the outside world and children uncover, discover, and investigate the natural world. When taking a group of three year old children outside to go on a walk to the park, teachers often find the trip itself takes quite a long time. There are any number of stops along the way when a child says, "Nakiesha! Look over there! Look at that flower! It's so RED!"; "David, what did you pick up off the sidewalk, let me see that worm."; "Greg, what is that bird squawking about?"; "Norberta, there's a bunch of ants!" This article explores the child as a natural scientist, how children explore the natural world, what playing in nature looks like and how Grounds For Play engages children in nature play.

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Sand, water, mud, and buckets allow children to learn more science!

So let's go explore the natural world. When we open the door to the outside world, children are engaged in direct exploration, discovery, and sensory stimulation. Questioning, hypothesizing, discussing, and problem identifying and solving begins the important sense of inquiry - "let's find out"; "why?"; "what is that?" Exposure to the natural world and natural phenomena is critical to advancing children's thinking and developing higher-order thinking skills. What kind of opportunities can we provide on a daily basis that provide for a science potential, inquiry activity, or a chance to create a science concept in action? Nature learning experiences are all around us. What kinds of things might children discover in the natural world? The nature products offered by Grounds For Play allows for the inclusion of maintainable natural elements in educational play environments, providing ample opportunities for children to explore and discover the natural world. Grounds For Play's commitment to nature play stems from a growing concern that children are shut off from the world of nature due to increasing urbanization and focus on class time. Plants and natural settings add life to sterile playgrounds and expose children to the natural science principles as discussed above.

Nature's Supporters

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Science Teachers Association

(NSTA), the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the U.S. Secretary of Education are just a few players related to the world of nature and play. In 2007, a Carnegie Foundation Commission called for scientists, researchers and theoreticians to look at the modern workforce in terms of innovation. Their conclusions stretched across a simple concept of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). To that end, STEM has now become a way of thinking about learning in today's society. The North American Association of Environmental Education's Natural Start Alliance shares, through their "In Early Childhood Learning Comes Naturally," the fact that in 2014 the NSTA adopted its position statement relative to young children and science. They state,

NSTA made an official endorsement of the importance of science learning in early childhood. The statement calls on educators to provide rich learning environments that allow children to ask questions, plan investigations, and discuss findings through open-ended, inquiry-based explorations.

Grounds For Play knows that children learn best about nature by being in nature! Our fast-paced culture is starving for connection to the natural world, so let's start helping children connect.

Nature Play in the News

In an article in The Elkhart Truth, community blogger Carla Gull talks about how local nature play spaces encourage creativity, imagination and connection to nature. More and more natural play spaces are being developed around her local community of Michiana. But why? Playing in nature promotes creativity, imagination, risk negotiation and healthy lifestyles in children.

Natural play areas are a perfect way to get outside with kids, experience appropriate risk and connect with nature. Our backyards can include great nature play elements as we provide places for digging, climbing and interacting with nature. Additionally, we find "natural" play areas at places like Lieber Nature Preserve... with a large downed tree that becomes a great jungle gym.

In a recent National Public Radio (NPR) report, one Vermont elementary school's kindergarten children spend one full day a week outdoors. There has been an overall positive impact on children's explorations, discovery and love of the natural world.

A lucky kindergarten class in central Vermont are out in the woods building with sticks and logs, running around, and speaking several volumes above what is acceptable in the typical library. For these lucky kids, this outdoor adventure isn't a one-off, special field trip: it's Forest Monday, the day each week where they take their learning out of the classroom. Their teacher Eliza Minucci had watched a documentary on a forest school and felt her young charges, especially the boys, could benefit from more devoted outdoor time.

The desire to provide natural elements to children is second nature to Grounds For Play. Research shows that children benefit greatly from daily connections with the natural world. These benefits have a lasting impact, especially when positive experiences with nature come at an early age and are supported by caring adults.

EXAMPLES OF NATURE PLAY AND NATURE EXPLORATION

Let's ask the children about nature play!

Nature play is most often thought of as outdoor play! According to children, nature and the natural world includes things that grow; things that are alive, fly, creep and crawl; have legs, eyes and bodies; and appear in the sky or are on the ground, or are even under the ground. It can include things that are alive or even things that are just there such as rocks, the wind, and clouds. What scientific fields across all disciplines have these children have touched upon? They include biology, physiology, geology, geography, animal behavior, and so much more because little children want to know!

Discovering the natural world in a hula hoop!

The three third grade classes came into the computer lab and on the Smart Board was a collection of nature object images such as a grassy field, a butterfly, and some stones. On the floor was a green colored hula hoop. Above the images were the words: "What do you think we could discover, uncover or find if we were to explore the natural world inside the circle of a hula hoop that is laying down on a patch of ground in our play yard?" The students were to go to work and come up with ideas, thoughts and concepts about what they might find. After their discussions, they were to go explore the internet and find images of what they discussed -- ants, rocks, soil, roots, leaves, sticks, twigs, bugs, bones, and even treasure. The big question was, "Will we really be going outside and doing this?" Taking their speculations, hypothesizing, and conjecture to the real nature exploration and discovery of their ideas and thoughts. Yes, they did go outside and they came up with some excellent observations about "man and nature." The third grade naturalists discovered that the amount of man-made stuff was quite amazing and didn't expect the amount that they found. (See Lesson Plan)



Rabbit! Nature play with second graders.

2nd grade children prepared for their full day of nature exploration of pond life by reading, thinking and conceptualizing what they may find during their adventure. After their full day excursion and group discussion, they came up with the following areas, events and experiences. This is what they found and even touched: water bugs, tadpoles, frogs, salamanders, ticks, turtles, flowers, cattails, lily pads, and snails! It was apparent that in their exuberant sharing and talking about what they did in terms of natural science inquiry and hands-on, minds-on learning was nature play!

Grounds For Play and Nature“

It is the interest, hope and very core of Grounds For Play that they are indeed a purveyor of outdoor environments from the ground up. Here is a listing of just some of the natural play materials and child interest areas that make Grounds For Play part of nature play: water play, sand play, weather stations, rain gauges, sun dials, fossil replicas, wooden structures, natural balance beams, nature centers, butterfly houses, bird feeders, garden bridges, nature and science centers, investigation and discovery tables, planters, playground boulders, garden boxes, growing boxes, raised planter boxes, willow hut, and garden frames.

How do children benefit from nature play and devoted outdoor time?

In the Online Parent Co, Edward Shepard (Nature, Raising Kids, Summer Feature, and Published on April 18th, 2015) writes about eight science-backed reasons for letting your kids play outdoors:

- Better vision
- Better resistance to disease
- Increased vitamin D
- Less stress
- Better attention spans, even for children with ADHD symptoms
- Better physical fitness
- Better physical coordination
- Better classroom performance
- Sparks curiosity and Imagination
- Better nature literacy and local ecology understanding and awareness

Sample Lesson Plan

Title: “From Hula Hoops to Grass in the Playground: What’s Up?”

Goals: The students will discuss and hypothesize about the nature and contents of an area of grass that is located on the grounds of the school. In groups of four, they will explore specific grass areas as marked out and encompassing a round area about five feet in diameter using five foot hula hoops. Do this for a period of 30 minutes.

Objectives: The students will physically manipulate, touch, explore and discover, uncover and collect information and “data” working in small groups. The students will hypothesize, discuss, question and postulate ideas related to this natural material. They will compare, contrast, describe, differentiate and write down the various attributes and qualities of the ground area they explore. (These higher order science and nature thinking skills ideas will be typed into their personal logs and journals on their computers and their personal files.)

Key Terms: choose, compare, contract, describe, differentiate write down, attributes, qualities, nature, natural materials, living, dead, alive, space, ground, dirt, mud, etc.

Materials: large outside grass area play space, 5 to 8 (five foot) hula hoops, four children stations per hula hoop.

Curriculum Area: Science: The Natural World

Number of Children Appropriate for Activity: 4 students per hula hoop, sufficient space for students to work in small teams of four students.

Procedure(s) (step-by-step):

1. Have students log-into their computers and pull up a blank page for their work.
2. Ask the students about the hula hoop in the middle of the floor.
3. Ask about science and the natural world as seen in a micro-world.
4. Ask if anyone saw the movie *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*.
5. What kinds of things did the children discover, uncover related to nature and the natural world?
6. Ask the students to think about what they might discover, uncover and discuss if given the opportunity to work in teams of four students?
7. Confirm with the students that they are indeed going outside and working in teams of four to explore the natural world found within the five foot diameter of the hula hoop when placed on the grass in the play yard.
8. Have students bring notebooks, and provide plastic bags for any particular unique or different objects, discoveries, etc.
9. Remind students that they will have about 15 minutes of discovery and observation time outside.
10. Students will return to the computer lab to write up their team reports and observational findings.

Possible Extended Activities:

- Video tape students.
- Photograph the student’s exploration.
- Write up the comments, thoughts and ideas on chart paper and/or on the computer Smart Board.

Discussion: Overall the students were very engaged and actively exploring the small group selected grass areas in the playground. A wide variety of comments, thoughts and ideas were expressed during their individual small group time exploring the areas within the hula hoops on the playground grass areas.

Evaluation:**TEACHER:**

I think the explanation for the Science Grass Area Exploration Lesson Plan was clear. It was a challenge to ask the students to first think about and discuss, hypothesize about what they might discover, uncover once they directly explored their group-selected outside place space. I did walk around and made individual comments, suggestions and/or questioned the students.

STUDENTS:

The students were able to explore, describe and experience the diversity their group selected grass areas. They were very excited to be going outside and laying down on the grass. They wrote notes, comments, descriptions and other information about the discoveries. They were all able to compare, contrast and describe the various attributes and qualities of the grass area. A number of students commented on the living and things that were not-living. They were very surprised at the amount of "Man made" refuse and debris that was found in each of the groups discoveries.



CHAPTER 7

Art Play

Decisions at Meeting Time

At meeting time, the children are asked where they want to start their explorations and work today; “Shawn, Nakiesha, Albert, Norberto...What are you thinking about? What do you want to do today?”

Albert: “Art room.”

Nakiesha: “Art room.”

Shawn: “Art room.”

Teacher: “Norberto, can I guess where you want to go? The art room!”

Norberto: “Yes!”

Teacher: “You four know where everything is. If you decide you are painting at the aisles, what do you need?”

Children : “Our smocks!”

Aspects of Visual Arts

...Young children experiment enthusiastically with art materials and investigate the ideas presented to them through visual arts instruction. They exhibit a sense of joy and excitement as they make and share their artwork with others. Creation is at the heart of this instruction. Students learn to work with various tools processes, and media. They learn to coordinate their hands and minds in exploration of the visual world. They learn to make choices that enhance communication of their ideas. Their natural inquisitiveness is promoted and they learn the value of perseverance. (National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts, 1994)

The Importance of Visual Arts

Self-expression, creativity, exploration, and creation are a few words that come to mind when we think of art. In addition to providing a diversity of images, sights, ideas, and concepts, art helps develop emerging skills such as observational and physical motor skills in the early childhood art setting. Additionally, art helps to develop a child’s vocabulary and encourages them to experiment in expressing their ideas and thinking, which is artistic expression. The art area within an early childhood environment should provide the setting, materials, and guidance to allow for such artistic expression. Artistic expression provides a child with the opportunity for individuality, self-expression, and unique use of art media in order to give an individual the power to create and form ideas.

Art Play and the Developmental Domains

Norberto, Shawn, Nakiesha, and Albert are exploring the art room.

Norberto, sitting on the floor, takes out a variety of sea shells and forms a circle. He looks at the different shells and selects those that are a darker color. He places those in the middle of the circle with little white stones around the edges. He is creating what appears to be a face with ears, eyes, a nose, a smiling mouth, and long string for hair. He calls Albert over to look at his work.

Nakiesha and Shawn are painting on easels. They are talking and mixing colors. Nakiesha is using long brush strokes and is covering the whole top of the paper. Shawn has several small figures that are at the bottom of the paper. He looks over at Nakiesha's painting and says, "Your sky is turning out awesome." She smiles and continues to paint with a brush in each hand.

Albert is focused on his picture and looking at the crayons. He says to Norberto, "I like these new crayons; I like the fact that they are all sharp and have good tips on them!" Albert is holding the crayons like a pencil and writing letters across the middle of the paper. He is coloring the letters with different colors. "I'm going to ROY G. BIV these!"

An art room should speak to all developmental domains including social, emotional, cognitive, motor, language, and values. The 5- and 6-year-old children in the example above are demonstrating their ability to make choices, sensory experiences, cognitive and language abilities, and development of fine and gross motor skills.

Children have the opportunity for social and emotional development when they interact and share their works. Additionally, they can express emotions and feelings through their art with the selection of textures, colors, and the medium they select. Nakiesha chose painting, which allowed her to practice fine motor skills as she holds the paint brush in her hand. Albert is holding his crayons while he writes letters practicing language development.

A Well Appointed Art Space

Let's now explore the physical space that provides for such rich opportunities of self-expression, movement, creativity, and enjoyment. What constitutes an effective art space? Author Linda Edwards shares the following related to art materials:

Children use art materials in an effort to bring order to their experiences and to represent their knowledge in tangible form. The materials we provide must give children a sense of mastery and control, and we must not sacrifice these experiences, regardless of how much we, as adults, want to expose children to all the materials we see in brochures and catalogs. (Linda Edwards)

Here are examples of items for an effective art space:

- Mediums such as large crayons, white and colored chalk, Tempera paint, markers, and colored pencils
- Construction paper, mat board, and colored paper
- Collage materials such as beads, small sea shells, glitter, cotton balls, and fabric scraps
- Tools such as scissors, glue, and tape
- Assorted paint brushes
- Washable ink stamp pads and assorted stamps
- Safety goggles
- Washable floor covering
- Double sided easels or clear plexiglas easels
- Sturdy work bench
- Sink

- Shelves for supplies and materials
- Movable art supply cart
- Wall art display with lighting
- Measuring tools such as rulers and yard sticks

Let's take a look at Grounds For Play art environment opportunities. With over 16 items useful for art space designs, you'll have the equipment and potentials for an outstanding outside art area. Products include:

- Art Easel
- Universal Art Easel
- Art Mural
- Art Mural Stage
- Basic or Deluxe Art Studio
- Documentation Panel
- Art Area Sign
- Bi-Level Curriculum Cabinet
- Portable Art Cabinet
- Media Table with Lazy Susan
- Nesting Table with Chairs
- Trex® Picnic Table
- Storage and Activity Table
- Chalkboard Panel

Creating an Environment for Art Play

The organization of the Art Area is directly related to its effectiveness in inspiring children's creativity and self-expression. If the area is inviting, children will be drawn to the art materials kept there. But if the Art Area looks messy, overwhelming, or barren, children are not likely to be attracted to it. Children's creativity flourishes in an environment that is both appealing and well-organized. (Dodge, D.T., Colker, L.J & Heroman, C. 2008)

Using Grounds For Play products, we created a functional art space that is open, flexible, and provides children with a variety of spaces to explore, experiment, and work on their own individual artistic ideas.

Inside, the two "Lazy Susan" Media Tables provide for small group opportunities. Art materials and supplies can be placed both at the ends of the tables and on the "Lazy Susan," providing easy turning and easy access to playdough, clay, markers, and other art materials.

The Art Easels are easily accessible and can accommodate up to four children. They can either paint directly on the easels with easy clean-up or paint on paper. If painting on paper, they can transfer their work from the easel to the drying rack for later framing, bringing their works home, or to a display area.

The Portable Art Cabinets are ideal for both teacher and student access. The cabinets can be rearranged for various projects such as large group projects.

The Exploration Table can house any number of interchangeable art materials including clay or playdough for messy, fun hands-on learning.

We recommend placing a sink area in your art space for easy cleanup. Additionally, we recommend placing plexiglas frames at low levels so art work can be displayed and changed weekly or monthly.

As we transition to the outdoor art environment, the space is extended. This allows for great flexibility when working on larger group projects and extended art groups. The outdoor space features a number of the same products as the indoor space with the addition of the Art Mural Stage, which can function in many ways. Children can paint, display, or practice dramatic art.

EXHIBIT 1



EXHIBIT 2



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