

**A PLAY BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT:  
A HANDBOOK FOR CHILDCARE WORKERS**

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## Abstract

This handbook provides an overview of the importance of play in children's lives and guidelines for a supportive play environment. Play is defined using six criteria to identify play and non-play situations. The developmental interactionist philosophy of Early Childhood Education is explained to illustrate beliefs which support a play-based environment. Historical perspectives of play and research supporting the role of play in children's development are outlined. The importance of sufficient time for play is explained. Guidelines are included for a supportive physical environment and a culturally sensitive environment. The adult's roles in play are explained with examples of adult-child interactions which support and encourage play. Appropriate and inappropriate intervention techniques for adult involvement in play are examined.

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## Introduction

*Four- year old Heidi is in the circus dramatic play centre. She examines the clothes hanging on the clothes rack - feeling the textures, exploring the colours and examining the hats, ties, coats, and accessories. She drapes a silky sheer pink cape around her shoulders, puts on white lace gloves, opens up a small umbrella, places it on her shoulders and twirls it as she walks around the room.*

*John watches Heidi, then he puts a tiara on his head and smiles at me. "Are you a prince or a king?" I ask. "No, I'm a queen," he says and walks away.*

*Heidi approaches me and smiles, "I'm a princess. I like to dress up." Jill joins her; they return to the circus centre and Jill puts on a red nose, a stetson, and a tiara. Heidi and Jill walk around the room, arm in arm, sharing the umbrella as they walk in the pretend rain. They approach the play dough table where I am sitting. "How are things at the castle?" I ask. Heidi purses her lips, lowers her eyes and replies: "It's not very good. It's raining, raining, raining, it's storming. There's water everywhere. It's not good at all."*

*Jill and Heidi begin to manipulate the play dough. Jill says, "I'm making supper. I'm making some dessert. I'm making blue-blue - blueberry." Heidi says, "I'm making strawberry." Jill replies, "Chocolate cake." Heidi adds, "I'm making chocolate cake too." Jill says, "I'll make supper." (Feb. 26, 1991, Lethbridge area preschool)*



*He begins a new row. Tom says, "It's fun to play with words. This is getting ridiculous." He glues on a P and a R; I sound it out. "This is getting complicated," I say. Tom says, "I'm going to add four more letters. It's going to be so...it's going to go from top to bottom. It's fun to do this."*

*He continues to add letters. "I'm not going to stop until it goes from the top to the bottom. I'm going to fill the whole page." He continues to cut out letters and glue them to his page. "This is good, this is getting complicated." He continues to add letters and asks me to read his word. I read the word with some difficulty and he laughs. "This is getting stupid," he says. "I'll cut these letters here, then I'm done." He adds more letters.*

*Forty minutes have passed and Tom looks around the room for the first time since he began the activity. He continues to add some letters and I read the word which ends in TO. I say, "Oh, I know a word that starts with TO." Tom bites his bottom lip and looks at me. I point to his name tag. He smiles and shouts, "My name!" He says, "I should add an M." He looks at the letters and words on the table and discovers that there are no M letters to cut out. He says, "I'll just print an M on the paper." He picks up chalk in his right hand and prints an upper case M. He cuts out and glues on three letters, prints a P, then cuts out and glues on three more letters. "Okay I'm done. Read it," he says. I read his word:*

*SSPROESTR*

*TSISHSPOSRI*

*PRJOHSPSTOM*

*TRIPRSH.*

*He smiles and says he needs to go wash his hands. He takes his scrapbook to his preschool teacher, then puts it away and runs over to the listening centre and puts on earphones. (March 25, 1991, Lethbridge area preschool)*

Most people would readily agree that Heidi, Jill, and John are involved in play. They are pretending and playing out new roles. They are exploring materials, the environment, and their interactions with others in a way that is meaningful for them. Tom's activity may not be as readily identified as play. However, Tom is involved in a play activity. What are the criteria for play? How can one identify play? Why are these play activities important for children?

In this paper, play is defined and the importance of play is examined. Designing a supportive environment for play, creating a culturally sensitive environment, and the adult's role in play will be outlined.

## What Is Play?

Gadamer (1986) stated: “Play is so elementary a function of human life that culture is quite inconceivable without this element” (p. 22). This elementary function is difficult to define; however, Neumann’s (1971), Garvey’s (1977), and Rubin, Fein, and Vandenberg’s (1983) definitions are often used in Early Childhood Education. There are certain essential factors which define play.

### Play is intrinsically motivated.

The purpose of the activity is the activity itself, not grades, awards, or fulfilling an adult’s objectives. In play, children engage in activities for their own sake and for the internal satisfaction. The reason for playing comes from within the individual. The child is not motivated by competition or social demands. The reward is the process or experience itself. There are no external goals and the play is undertaken more for the process than for any particular purpose or end (Shipley, 1993). When the child is intrinsically motivated, she/he *learns* in her/his own way and learns what she/he wants to learn. Therefore, in play there are no readily identified specific teaching objectives as the child determines the focus of the activity and there is no conscious teaching. Heidi, Jill, and John were intrinsically motivated. Although Tom began his activity because he had been directed to do so by an adult (external motivation), once he began the activity he continued for 45 minutes because he wanted to do so (intrinsic motivation).

### Play is freely chosen.

In play, children freely choose the activities. In play, children decide what to play. In a study with kindergarten children, King (1979) discovered that children would define an activity as play if they chose the activity on their own but defined the identical activity as work if it were assigned by the

teacher. Heidi, Jill, and John did freely choose their activity. Initially, Tom did not freely choose his activity but he chose how to do the activity and he chose to stay with the activity for a long period of time. What began as a teacher-directed activity became play.

Play allows children to have control over the activity.

The children themselves determine rules, purpose, agenda, and timetable. The children have choices about their roles, their use of time, and the activity they will do. Children decide what materials to use, how to use them, and why to use them - all to fulfill their own inherent needs. There are no externally imposed rules to control the children's play. The teacher does not direct the children. The adult does not say: "Now you will all be butterflies" or "Everyone use the blue paint". However, the adult facilitates play by being aware of developmental needs, allowing time for play, providing materials, being sensitive to children's needs, and being aware of appropriate intervention and inappropriate interruptions.

For Heidi, Jill, and John, the dress-up clothes and the play dough and accessories facilitated play. The children were not directed to use materials in a certain, predetermined way. The children themselves decided how to play. Because Tom decided how to pursue the activity and for how long; he continued, in his own unique manner, to control his activity. He was not told his words weren't real. His language play was respected.

To allow children to have control, adults must be willing to relinquish their control and their expectations about how children use materials or carry out an activity. In one preschool, college practicum students set out a variety of tree branches, wool, and tin foil on a table. The *adult's* expectation was that the children would become involved in weaving. Four 4-year-olds began to examine and explore the materials. Martin announced,

“Hey, I know, we can make fishing poles!” Through discussion, problem solving and negotiation, the children created fishing poles, cut out paper fish, and played out a complex fishing expedition; then cooked and ate their fish. In this incident, the children were in control as they were allowed to use the materials in a way that was meaningful for them. The adults supported the children’s unique way of using the materials by not interfering or changing the activity to conform to adult expectations. The adults responded to the children’s requests for paper and scissors, helped them clear an area for their fishing expedition, and allowed the children to move materials from one area of the preschool to another.

Play has a non-literal quality.

“Play transports children beyond reality” (Maxim, 1993, p. 145). Children can separate their play activities from the demands of everyday experiences. The play is meaningful as it comes from within the child and represents his/her view of the world; the adult does not impose his/her view of reality on the children. “Play is very real to the child and is in many ways the child’s true reality” (Shipley, 1993, p. 18). Children can pretend and substitute new meanings for everyday objects. They can experiment with new possibilities and make-believe. For example, for a child at play, a climbing structure becomes a fire engine, a block becomes a doll, or the child becomes the mother. An “as if” approach toward reality allows children to create a play boundary and escape the constraints of the here and now (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1987). In the observation of Heidi, Jill, and John, Heidi becomes a princess and John becomes a queen, the nursery school becomes a castle, and they pretend it is raining. They use play dough as if it were food. They were not bound by external rules and they used materials in unique ways. Similarly, Tom played with language; his word

was not a real word but he was making sense of the written word in his own way.

Play is pleasurable, spontaneous and enjoyable.

Children simply enjoy the activity for its own sake. A child may roll down a hill over and over again for the physical pleasure of the movement; a child may pour mustard seed into the water wheel to experience the sound and the visual impact. Heidi and Jill played their roles for enjoyment; Tom played with letters and words because it was fun.

Play involves active involvement of the player.

Children are involved physically, psychologically, or both, rather than being passive or indifferent to the activity (Hughes, 1991, p. 3).

Play gives the hands something to do. And when the hands are active, the mind engages. ... Active involvement requires pumping adrenalin. Passive sitting and listening to talk that is largely boring do not lead to the pumping of adrenalin; therefore, there is very little mind engagement. When the hands are actively engaged in play, adrenalin is being pumped, and learning is more substantive . ... Active learning builds understanding (Wassermann, 1992, 135-136).

All the children in the preceding play activities were actively involved - they were physically and intellectually engrossed in their activities.

Adults can identify play and non-play activities using the above criteria. However, children often have their own views about play and work. A preschool teacher related this story:

One day I was having a really informal discussion about work and the children were telling me about their parents' work. One child, I'll never forget, turned and looked at me and said, "Linda, do you work?" I thought, "I'm just here to play with them so in their perspective that wasn't work."

In another incident, four year old Tyler clearly identified his own views on play in the preschool environment and reminded me of the requirements for play. Tyler was sitting at a table completing a puzzle. I approached the table with clip board and pen in hand and asked Tyler if I could join him. Tyler hesitated, then firmly announced: "You can sit here if you want but no writing; you can't write here." Surprised and curious by his response, I asked him why I couldn't write at the table. He replied, "Because you do your writing at home. You don't write here." It appears that in Tyler's view writing is not play and if I wanted to join him at the table my role was to be as a player not a worker.

#### Play/Non-Play Continuum

Certainly not all play activities will fulfill all six requirements for play. Activities can be placed along a play - non-play continuum. Some activities, which come close to meeting all six criteria, are at the play end of the continuum. Other tedious and goal-directed activities, which are being completed due to the demands of others, are at the non-play end of the continuum. For example, balancing a cheque book is not play! Table One summarizes the criteria for play and non-play activities.

Table One

Play/Non-Play Continuum

	<b>PLAY</b>	<b>NON-PLAY</b>
<p><b>MOTIVATION</b> Why is the child engaged in the behavior?</p>	<p>The child is involved for the sake of the activity itself - not to please someone else and not because they have to do the activity. The child wants to do the activity at the time of the activity.</p>	<p>The child is involved in the activity to achieve a prize, reward, award, or to please someone else. The child is told by someone to do the activity.</p>
<p><b>CHOICE</b> Who has chosen the activity?</p>	<p>The child can freely choose an activity. There is a variety of choices available.</p>	<p>The child is told what to do and has no choice of whether to participate or not.</p>
<p><b>CONTROL</b> Who is in charge?</p>	<p>The child decides what to do and how to do the activity. There are no pre-set guidelines as the child sets the guidelines. There is no one right way to do the activity.</p>	<p>The adult tells the child what to do and imposes specific rules and guidelines about the activity. The child is expected to do the activity the right way.</p>
<p><b>LITERALITY</b> Can the child freely pretend?</p>	<p>The child can pretend or act "as-if". The child is not bound by reality and can make-believe. The child escapes the constraints of reality.</p>	<p>There are very specific restraints on the child. The child is told to use materials in the "right" way or told to act like a dog only in the way demonstrated by an adult.</p>
<p><b>INVOLVEMENT</b> What is the level of involvement?</p>	<p>Children are actively involved.</p>	<p>Children are passive and indifferent.</p>
<p><b>PLEASURE</b> Is this activity enjoyable and fun?</p>	<p>The activity is enjoyable for its own sake. Play is fun without fear of failure. Play is often spontaneous.</p>	<p>The activity is tedious and unpleasant. The child must complete the activity as directed by an adult whether or not the activity is enjoyable.</p>

[Adapted from Ellis, M. (1973) and Isenberg, J. & Jalongo, M. (1993)].

## The Developmental Interactionist Philosophy

To accept play as a valid, significant force in children's learning, a philosophy which supports learning through play is needed. The practice of Early Childhood Education is guided by a developmental interactionist philosophy. In this philosophy, early childhood educators believe that children pass through stages as they mature and that children are active learners who make sense of their world based on their experiences. Proponents of this philosophy believe that learning is an active process and children need to construct knowledge through direct involvement with people, materials, and the environment rather than just acquire knowledge through rote learning. To allow children to construct an understanding of the world in a meaningful way, children require varied play experiences within an environment which allows them to explore, manipulate, and experiment with intriguing, sensory materials. In an Early Childhood environment, children need opportunities to take initiative, to pose problems, and to generate solutions which are meaningful and significant to them (Franklin & Biber, 1977, p. 11).

There are several basic premises or beliefs about children which underlie the developmental interactionist philosophy.

1. Children pass through various stages as they develop.

Knowledge of child development is essential to provide experiences, interactions, and materials suited to children's developmental stages. Children cannot be rushed through these stages or forced to learn and develop according to a predetermined timetable. Children need time to be children. Therefore, ongoing observations of children are necessary to determine an appropriate curriculum which supports each child's developmental stage. Adults need to observe, record and

evaluate children's development on a regular basis to provide activities which meet each child's needs.

2. Early Childhood Education promotes the development of the whole child. Physical, emotional, social, cognitive, language, and creative areas are interrelated; attention to all areas of development contribute to a fully functioning human being. Therefore, in planning and evaluating early childhood programs, consideration needs to be given to each developmental area.

3. Children learn through play and need large periods of uninterrupted time for self-selected play. Children require a wide variety of relevant, meaningful activities and experiences which allow them to use all their senses, problem solve, experiment, explore, and discover.

Knowledge is not something that is given to children as though they were empty vessels to be filled. Children acquire knowledge about the physical and social world in which they live through playful interaction with objects and people. Children do not need to be forced to learn; they are motivated by their own desire to make sense of the world (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 52).

4. Each child is recognized, accepted and valued as a unique individual with his/her own rate of growth, interests, learning style, culture, and background.

5. Children have a right to a psychologically safe environment. They deserve a happy, healthy, trusting, and secure environment with responsible, nurturing, caring, informed caregivers who respect childhood and children. "Respect for childhood requires paying attention to and showing esteem for the characteristics of childhood - such as activity, impulsiveness, curiosity, learning through exploration

- and then organizing teaching and learning to reflect these understandings" (Goffin, 1989, p. 69).

Children need:

- the opportunity to touch, manipulate, and experiment with concrete, real, and relevant learning materials and equipment.
- interactions with people.
- involvement in hands-on activities and experimentation.
- time to become involved, investigate, select, and persist in activities.
- the opportunity to be independent.
- exposure to open-ended materials such as sand, water, blocks, woodworking, and manipulatives.
- dramatic play activities.

6. Children require positive guidance techniques. To develop self-control and a positive self-esteem children require an environment that focuses on choices, trust, independence and autonomy. Children's feelings need to be respected and acknowledged as valid. Children need to develop a sense of competence and positive feelings toward learning.

7. Early Childhood educators work in partnership with parents to benefit children. A professional relationship with parents involves mutual respect. Professional early childhood educators respect parents' needs, respond to their concerns, and communicate with parents in a caring manner. Child care workers demonstrate a positive attitude toward families regardless of their background, problems, culture, or

religious beliefs. Parents are respected for their knowledge and skills. Awareness of each child's family life enhances our understanding of children; therefore, ongoing communication with parents is essential. "By strengthening and supporting parents in their parenting role, we show consideration for the importance of family in a child's life and express esteem for the challenge of parenthood" (Goffin, 1989, p. 73). To develop a supportive relationship with parents, caregivers need to be aware of and utilize varied community resources.

## The Role Of Play In Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood educators who support the developmental interactionist philosophy advocate a play-based Early Childhood program. The importance of play in supporting children's learning certainly is not a new discovery. Many educators throughout history including Plato, Comenius, Rousseau, Froebel, and Dewey encouraged play to enhance children's learning.

Plato (427 - 347 BC.) believed that through play children's natural talents and abilities could be discovered. Play was used to educate children and condition them for their future roles (Plato, 1955). In The Great Didactic, first published in 1628, Comenius stated that children require concrete, sensory materials and meaningful experiences. Educators should follow children's natural timetable for learning. Children should learn in a joyful and pleasurable way. Comenius believed that play was the natural medium of education.

Rousseau also supported play for children. In The Emile (1762), Rousseau expressed the view that children should be allowed to experience childhood in a natural way and that education should be unhurried. He stated: "Our pedantic eagerness to instruct is always leading us to teach children what they can better learn for themselves, and to forget the things they need to be taught" (Boyd, 1956, pp. 28-29).

Froebel (1782 - 1852) expanded on the ideas of these educators. He is known as the father of kindergarten and saw educators as facilitators or gardeners who nurture children's natural growth through play. He saw play as a spiritual activity, highly serious and of deep significance. The adult's role was seen as a designer and guide who set the stage for growth just as a gardener nurtures the growth of plants (Essa and Young, 1994).

Froebel's views were utilized by John Dewey during the 1920s and 1930s, the era of progressive education, when he opened up a laboratory school at the University of Chicago. Dewey (1916) called for a meaningful, integrated, experiential learning environment. Dewey stated that play is natural for children and play benefits children's physical, intellectual, and social development. Dewey advocated child-centered learning with the emphasis on the children's interests and active learning rather than isolated subject matter.

The beliefs of these early educators affect Early Childhood Education today. The Alberta handbook Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions (1984) states: "Play is essential to children's learning" (p. 1) and

Play is a central and necessary part of children's development. ... Play is a major learning process and, with its risk-free atmosphere, provides a natural opportunity for young children to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and to practise familiar ones. It provides many situations in which the child observes, discovers, reasons and solves problems. Play brings together physical and intellectual abilities, emotional health, creativity and the ability to get along with others (p. 3).

In 1987, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issued a document which has greatly influenced the practices of day cares, preschools, and family day homes. This document - Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 - cites the research and work of many psychologists and educators including Piaget, Kamii, Holt, Sutton-Smith, Elkind, Seefeldt, Hendrick, Katz and Kohlberg. The document states: "a growing body of research has emerged recently affirming that children learn

most effectively through a concrete, play-oriented approach to early childhood education” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 1).

NAEYC has influenced the philosophy and practices of many Alberta daycares. The Alberta Day Care Licensing Policy Manual (1992) supports play in preschool settings. “Opportunities for play are an integral and essential part of the day care program. The play environment must be organized to allow the child opportunities for free-choice, a variety of experiences, and accessible toys and equipment” (DL - 02 - 12 - 02, page 1).

From Plato’s time to the present, early childhood educators have supported play as a valuable and necessary activity for learning. Through child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play children learn and develop in natural ways. How does play contribute to children’s development and learning?

## Play And Child Development

"Play is children's way of learning about their world, and it is the one absolutely indispensable activity of early childhood. Through children's play with objects, each other, and words they discover their increasing power over the largely unpredictable world around them. ... In many cases we have not been able to find effective ways to teach elementary school children the same concepts that they absorb naturally in their pre-school play" (Weininger, 1990, p. 45).

In our hurried, pressured and 'fast track' society, it is often difficult to justify how a play-based early childhood education program is beneficial to children. Some parents and educators limit children's opportunities for pleasurable, intrinsically interesting play activities because play cannot be immediately and directly linked to academic success and to "ensuring success in the fast lane of adult life" (Weininger, 1990, p. 51). For many people play is seen as frivolous and a waste of time whereas work is seen as valuable and worthwhile. Often, play is seen as a reward for completing work; play, in and of itself, is not seen as educational.

However, a play-based program does contribute to academic success and to all aspects of children's development. Play promotes learning and helps children develop learning how to learn skills. Play contributes to the true empowerment of children (Wassermann, 1992). Through a variety of open-ended, child-selected play activities, children enhance and strengthen their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and creative development. "Play allows children to make discoveries that go far beyond the realm of what we adults think is important to know" (Wassermann, 1992, p. 133).

The psychologist Jean Piaget, who has had an enormous influence on Early Childhood Education for the past 35 years, stated that children learn through active, concrete, sensory experiences with varied materials and with people. He stated that children need the time and opportunity to problem solve, manipulate materials, and repeat activities in order to discover the meaning of concepts and ideas (Piaget, 1962). Recent research supports Piaget's beliefs. Johnson, Christie & Yawkey (1987) reviewed research evidence and concluded that play is linked to gains in IQ, performance on conservation tasks, divergent thinking, problem solving, creativity, language skills, and social competence.

### Language Development

According to Machado (1985), children's vocabulary development and language acquisition are facilitated in play situations as children interact with others. Play produces much child-to-child conversation. According to Singer and Singer (cited in Hendrick, 1988), children who use more creative dramatic play are happier and "their verbalization is richer in such things as metaphors and descriptive statements, and the amount of actual physical aggression is decreased" (p. 330). Play enables children to practice their language and literacy skills. They practice the forms and functions of language, engage in verbal interaction, and experiment with reading and writing (Isenberg and Jalongo, 1993).

Pellegrini's (1980) research led him to discover that kindergarten children's ability to play was highly related to achievement performance on the Metropolitan Readiness Test and word writing fluency. He concluded that those concerned with standardized test scores should create an environment which allows children opportunities for free play as "the skills

used in higher modes of play were also required in reading and writing” (p. 535).

### Physical Development

Bergen (1988) and Frost (1992) state that play contributes to physical development. Gross motor skills including large muscle control, balance, locomotion, strength, endurance, and coordination are developed and refined through play. Fine motor skills including hand dominance, dexterity and visual-perceptual skills such as eye-hand coordination, visual discrimination, figure ground, and small muscle coordination needed to hold a writing instrument are all supported through varied play activities.

### Cognitive Development

Several authors (Piaget, 1962; Bredekamp, 1986; Hendrick, 1994, 1992; and Wardle, 1987) state that play contributes to cognitive development. Play helps children understand their world by allowing them the opportunity to play with all the new concepts they are learning. As they internalize information and integrate experiences they engage in symbolic thinking and move from the concrete world of experience to the abstract world of ideas. As children play with new concepts they develop a wide variety of skills and abilities including matching, classifying, seriation, temporal ordering, sequence, causal relationships, the concepts of equivalence, reversibility and conservation, problem solving, creativity, flexibility, and divergent thinking (Hendrick, 1994, 1992; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1987). The development of these skills and concepts help children understand more abstract and complex reading, mathematical and scientific skills.

### Emotional Development

Play enables children to come to terms with and understand traumatic experiences; helps children work through, control and understand their fears, angers and frustrations; provides an emotional release from stress; and helps children deal with the pressures of conforming to adult standards (Fromberg, 1990; Hendrick 1994, 1992; Wardle, 1987). Through play, children sort out personal problems and deal with traumas and feelings such as separation, death, or abuse (Ryerse, 1992). Self-directed play “supports children’s sense of competence, self-esteem, and a sense of power” (Fromberg, 1990, p. 227). Play allows children to develop self-initiating behavior and autonomy. Children can make choices and engage in activities without direction from others. As play allows children to be autonomous, “play is ego-affirming as well” (Wassermann, 1992, p. 135).

### Social Development

Play contributes significantly to children's social skills. Hendrick (1992) states that play:

“provides countless opportunities for acquiring social skills: how to enter a group and be accepted by them, how to balance power and bargain with other children so that everyone gets satisfaction from the play, and how to work out the social give and take that is the key to successful group interaction” (p. 349).

Through play children learn to cooperate and interact with others; they learn about negotiating rules, roles and responsibilities and how to be a leader and a follower. By inventing rules they discover how organized games work and this translates into understanding all social situations. In play situations children develop important social skills such as taking turns, listening to and accepting ideas of other children, helping, sharing, taking

responsibility, asking others for help, and empathy (Hughes, 1991 & Shipley, 1993).

In sociodramatic play children develop understanding of roles in our society. Role-playing allows children to sort through and make sense of their experiences. Children discover what it is like to be a mother, a father, a firefighter, a construction worker or a doctor.

### Creative Development

Play is "the main avenue of creativity and imagination ... According to Einstein, creativity is far more consequential than knowledge in furthering the significant advances of humankind. For it is from the rich and fertile imaginations, much more than from accumulated information, that new forms such as the geodesic dome, the dymaxion car, the theory of relativity, the Fallingwater House at Bear Run, and the first airplane of Orville and Wilbur Wright spring to life. ... As children, we learned to be dreamers, and in our dreams flourished the images that shaped our lives. Of leaves we created faerie costumes; of dolls we created queens; of stories in books, we imagined fantastic pretend worlds as real as any we knew" (Wassermann & Ivany, 1988, p. 19).

Play contributes to creative thinking and creative actions. Through play, children are able to invent ideas, try new things and use their imaginations in risk-free environments. "When young children use their imaginations in play, they are more creative, perform better at school tasks, and develop a problem-solving approach to learning" (Isenberg and Jalongo,

1993, p. 38). Children learn to take risks, to be adventurous, independent, and self-reliant (Ryerse, 1992).

Richard Feynman, a Nobel Prize winner for physics, illustrates the importance of creative play in his life. In his 1985 memoirs, he recalls setting up a laboratory in his house when he was eleven or twelve years old. He explored electricity, fixed radios, invented a burglar alarm, and set up an intercom system in his home. He continued his inventions and explorations during his university education. For example, as a graduate student he became fascinated with ants. He stated:

One day some ants came out on the windowsill and wandered around a little bit. I got curious as to how they found things. I wondered, how do they know where to go? Can they tell each other where food is, like bees can? Do they have any sense of geometry? (Feynman, 1985, p. 94).

He designed experiments to discover the answers to his questions. This curiosity and his interest in geometry and the movement of ants may have contributed to his discovery which won him the Nobel Prize. Some years later, as a professor of physics at Cornell University, Feynman began to doubt his abilities and felt burned out. He said:

I used to enjoy doing physics. Why did I enjoy it? I used to *play* with it. I used to do whatever I felt like doing - it didn't have to do with whether it was important for the development of nuclear physics, but whether it was interesting and amusing for me to play with. ... I'd invent things and play with things for my own entertainment.

So I got this new attitude. ... I'm going to *play* with physics, whenever I want to, without worrying about any importance whatsoever (Feynman, 1985, p. 173).

Within the week, at the cafeteria, Feynman observed a man throwing a plate in the air and became interested in the motion of the wobbling plate. He began to work out equations of wobbles just for the fun of it and he

didn't worry about the importance of it. Feynman played with the problem and he discovered that through play he was making significant discoveries.

He stated:

It was effortless. It was easy to play with these things. It was like uncorking a bottle: Everything flowed out effortlessly. I almost tried to resist it! There was no importance to what I was doing, but ultimately there was. The diagrams and the whole business that I got the Nobel Prize for, came from that piddling around with the wobbling plate (Feynman, 1985, p. 174).

If young children are allowed to play with their ideas and figure out their problems then their creativity and wonder will remain intact. Like Richard Feynman, children may say: "I have to understand the world, you see" (Feynman, 1985, p. 231).

This research regarding play, learning, and child development illustrates the value of play in children's lives. To maximize the benefits of play, an awareness of the value of play needs to be combined with a play-centered environment. Teachers and caregivers need to provide enough time for play, provide a supportive physical environment, and be aware of adults' roles which support children's play.

## Time For Play

The most significant responsibility of the adult, as a facilitator of play, is providing sufficient time for play. The amount of time given to an activity gives a clear message about the importance of an activity (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993). By providing large periods of uninterrupted time (60 - 90 minute blocks) for indoor and outdoor play, the adult demonstrates that play is valued. Children require long periods of time for self-selected and self-initiated play in order to become actively involved in play experiences and to benefit fully from the play. “When children have large blocks of time, their play is more constructive, cooperative and expressive than with short, interrupted time periods” (Isenberg & Jalongo, p. 176). Sufficient time for play contributes to children’s self-expression, self-direction, problem solving skills, perseverance, and attention span (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993; Catron & Allen, 1993).

In a study of pre-school environments, Christie & Wardle (1992) discovered that longer play periods encourage higher social and cognitive forms of play, enable reluctant children to become involved in play and allow play to evolve in different directions. Dramatic play and constructive play are most notably affected by time. Children need time to plan, initiate, and carry out dramatic play activities. They need enough time to build elaborate structures and to use the structures in connection with dramatic play. Time is required to organize and plan group dramatizations - children need to “recruit co-players, select roles, get props, plan story lines, work out differences, and carry out their dramatizations. Once the original plot is exhausted, children can extend their story by adding new elements” (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1987, pp. 26-27).

Short intervals of play mean the schedule disrupts, interrupts, alters, and disengages children's attention and involvement in play. "Consequently play loses its meaning and much of the potential it might have had to motivate and provide feelings of success and mastery" (Shipley, 1993, p. 62). When play periods are too short, children build and tear down very simple block constructions, chase each other, and engage in limited social interactions. Wandering behavior, lack of involvement, and low-level play are more common with insufficient time for play (Christie & Wardle, 1992; Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1987)). When children do not have time to carry out play activities they may just give up choosing to engage in important types of play and choose simpler forms of play which easily fit into shorter time periods. Then important benefits of play such as planning, persistence, problem solving, and cooperation are lost.

Children who are given unlimited time for play are more likely to be able to devise imaginative situations, to follow through their discoveries and work out their problems than children whose play has often been cut short at the most interesting point. If children know from experience that play in school must be completed within a short time, or if left unfinished cannot be carried over to another time or day, then they 'adapt' their play to suit their time allocation (Manning & Sharp. 1977, p. 20) .

When children are not allowed to persist at activities which are interesting and meaningful to them, adults send the message that the adult imposed timetable is more important than children's activity and involvement. Nash (1989) records the following conversation between two children from two different nursery schools at a picnic site:

A boy from one program called to his friend from the other group: "Hey Peter, come and help me find more of these pink stones." Peter replies, "No, by the time I get started it will be time for juice and cookies. It isn't worth starting" (p. 33).

Nash adds:

Worse, if his interest in an activity did coincide with the pre-planned schedule, he had to stop at the appointed time. The reason given for splitting programs into “active” and “non-active”, large and small groups, is that children have short attention spans and need variety. This strategy is likely to decrease attention span and provide variety whether it is needed or not (p. 34).

To maximize play and learning, adults need to provide long periods of time for self-selected and self-initiated play and allow children to continue activities which are meaningful to them.

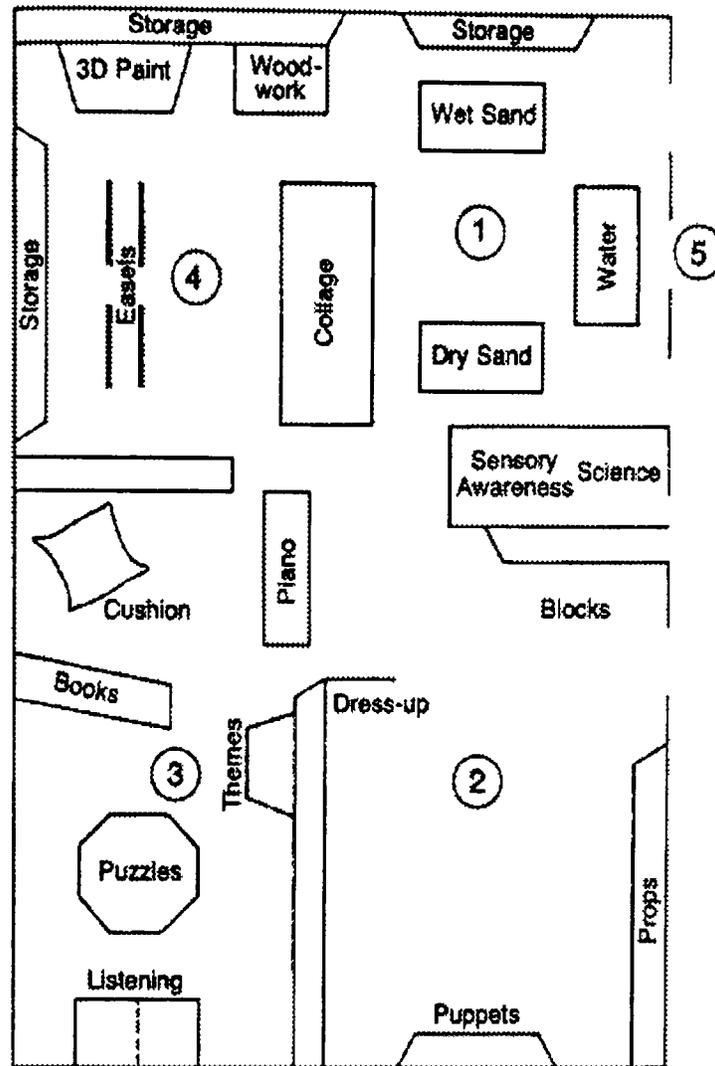
## The Physical Environment

A well planned environment will be safe and healthful, will meet the needs of both children and adults, will facilitate classroom management, will enhance the process of learning through play, and will support the implementation of program goals and objectives. ... Teachers need to ask themselves, 'What do we want children to be able to do here, and how can we make sure they are able to do it?' (Catron & Allen, 1993, pp. 78-81).

Provincial licensing regulations outline minimum standards for the physical environment including: the amount of space, storage, health and safety, arrangement of activity centres, materials and equipment, and eating and sleeping areas. Early Childhood settings are encouraged to exceed these minimum standards to provide the highest quality care possible and to maximize children's learning. Therefore, staff initiative, resourcefulness, creativity, and a commitment to children are all required to provide a setting which will encourage children's development in an inviting, comfortable and caring environment (Catron & Allen, 1993).

The most important consideration is that the environment must meet the needs of the children; the children should not be expected to adapt to meet the needs of the environment. Therefore, the environment should be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that it offers opportunities to achieve program goals.

To ensure children can engage in meaningful play activities, they require a safe, trusting environment with a variety of play areas, learning



1. Prerequisite and Science
2. Everyday Living
3. Quiet Activities
4. Creative Activities
5. Gross Motor

**Figure 1.** A well-planned learning environment.

**Note.** From: The Learning Environment. (p. 62) by C. Nash, 1989, Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada. Copyright 1989 by Collier Macmillan Canada.

activities, and materials which meet their varied needs and interests. Children need varied opportunities to explore and manipulate materials, to become involved in messy activities, to problem solve, to be independ-

ent, to spend time alone in quiet, passive activities, to expand on activities when necessary, to make choices, and to become involved in imaginative, creative play.

To facilitate choices and opportunities for different kinds of play, children need varied spaces for active play, quiet play, creative play, social play, and solitary play. Providing a third more play spaces than children allows children to change activities without having to wait (Marion, 1991, p. 91). For example, if you have a group of 20 children provide 27 spaces for those children.

Insufficient space limits activities and opportunities for social interaction. Too much space can be overwhelming to children and may limit social interaction or cause discipline problems. Poorly organized space may cause conflicts, disruptions and lead to frequent teacher intervention and may increase the need for unnecessary rules and regulations (Shipley, 1993). The opportunities for learning are lessened if the space does not allow children to freely choose activities and become actively involved in their environment without disturbing others. Kritchevsky and Prescott (1977) recommend that one-third to one-half of the total space should be open or uncovered space. These empty spaces offer possibilities to add new play areas or expand existing play areas. Flexibility in the physical environment is important as "it is much easier to rearrange space and equipment than it is to keep piling more and more arbitrary rules on children, rules that actually prevent children from controlling their space and themselves" (Marion, 1991, p. 85).

The exact arrangement of play areas will vary greatly from one setting to another depending on the room dimensions, location of windows, doors, entrance and exits, lighting, and floor coverings. However,

there are general guidelines which assist caregivers in designing an environment which meets children's needs.

### Guidelines for Arranging Space

- A spacious, attractive and inviting entrance welcomes parents and children to the centre.
- Children require personal lockers or cubbies for their clothing and personal belongings. Each child's personal space should be clearly labeled with his/her name and/or photo. This gives the child a sense of belonging.
- Provide a balance in your space. Provide quiet and noisy areas and separate the two areas. Separate messy or wet activities from dry activities. Messy activities such as art, sand and water require an easily cleaned floor surface. Children require spaces for privacy as well as space for cooperative play and group activities. Shipley (1993) recommends that activity areas with similar objectives but different materials be located close to one another to allow children to practice skills using a variety of materials and to transfer learning from one area to another.
- Children require soft spaces which reduce noise and provide a comfortable area. For example, pillows or couches in the reading area, rugs, rocking chairs, soft toys, and animals all contribute to a soft environment.
- Provide visible pathways which allow children to move easily from one area to another. Ensure pathways to and from bathrooms and between activity areas do not pass through existing play areas. Figure 2 illustrates appropriate pathways.

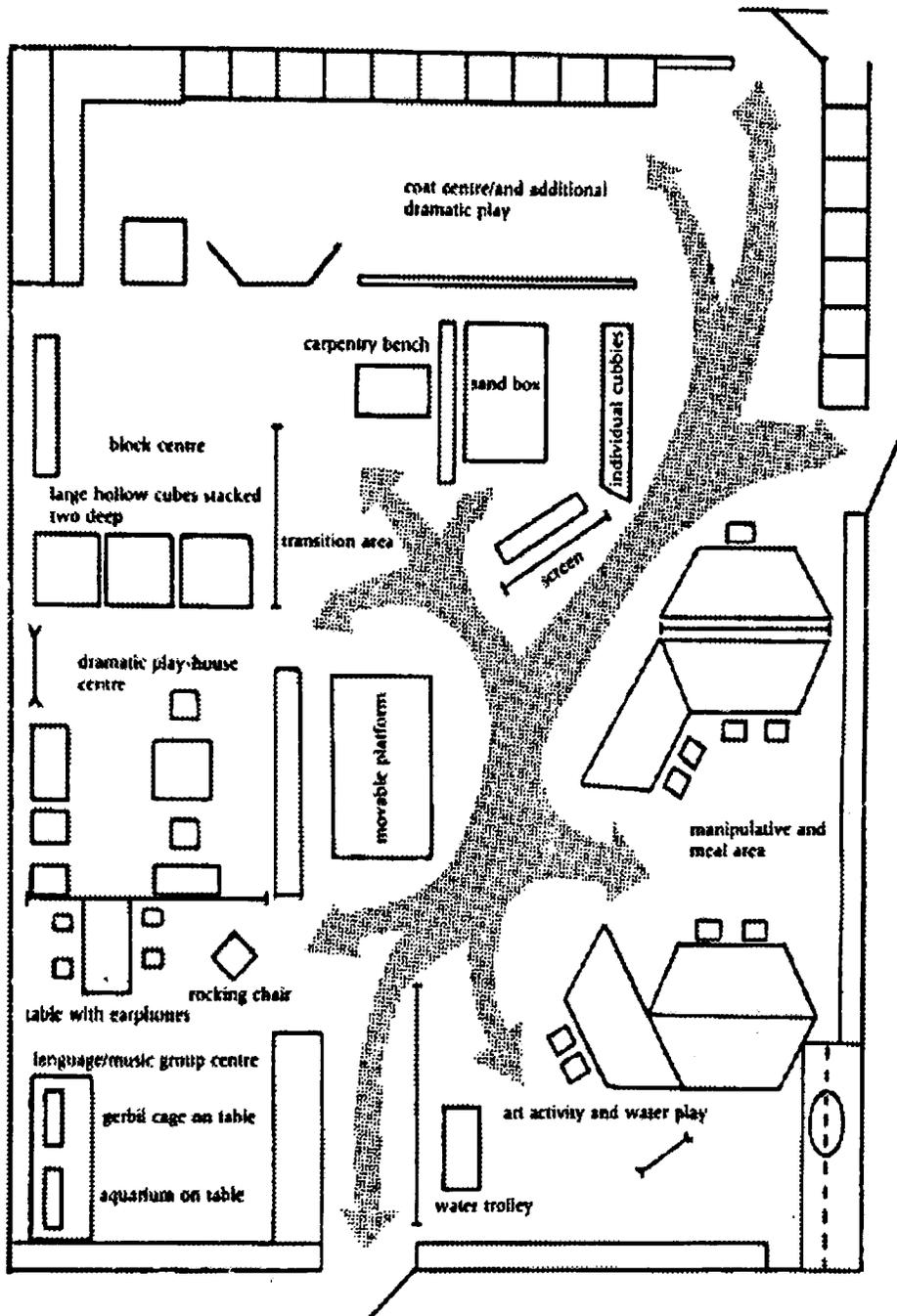


Figure 2. Pathways should be clearly defined.

Note. From Facilities and Equipment for Day Care Centres (p. 32) by S. Campbell, 1984, Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada.

- Provide child-sized furniture and equipment so children are comfortable in their environment. Refer to Figure 3.

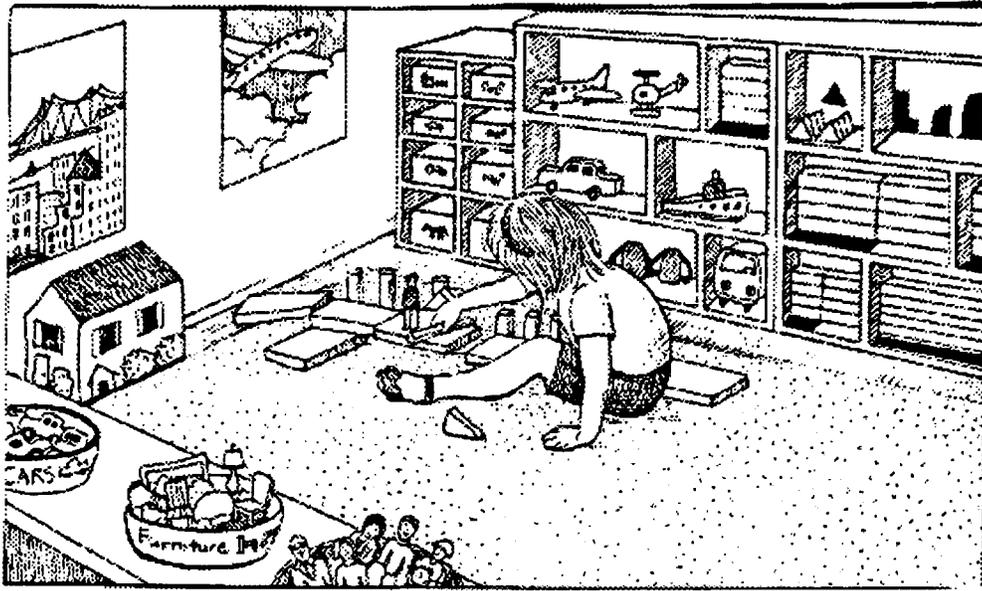


Figure 3. Child-sized equipment.

Note. From: Personal collection of photographs by Terri Cody.

- Provide enough room and materials in each play area to encourage cooperative play and minimize conflict. For example, the block area requires a large space ( see Figure 4) to allow children to cooperatively create large structures or permit individual children to build structures on their own without disturbing others.
- As children are sensory learners they benefit from a sensory rich environment. Attention should be given to colour, lighting, textures, and living things. Consider how you can create a beautiful

environment which allows children to discover it in our world.



**Figure 4.** Provide a large area for block play.

**Note.** From: The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood (p. 78) by D. Dodge and L. Colker, 1992, Washington, D.C.: Teaching Strategies. Copyright 1992 by Teaching Strategies, Inc.

- Materials for children should be easily accessible to encourage independence and to allow children to expand on their play without adult intervention. Ideally, easily movable storage units should be used to allow flexibility in the arrangement of play areas. Refer to Figure 5.
- Arrange the housekeeping and block areas side-by-side. This encourages children to expand their play into the adjacent area and encourages boys and girls to play together thus reducing gender stereotyping.
- The environment must be safe to allow children to explore and

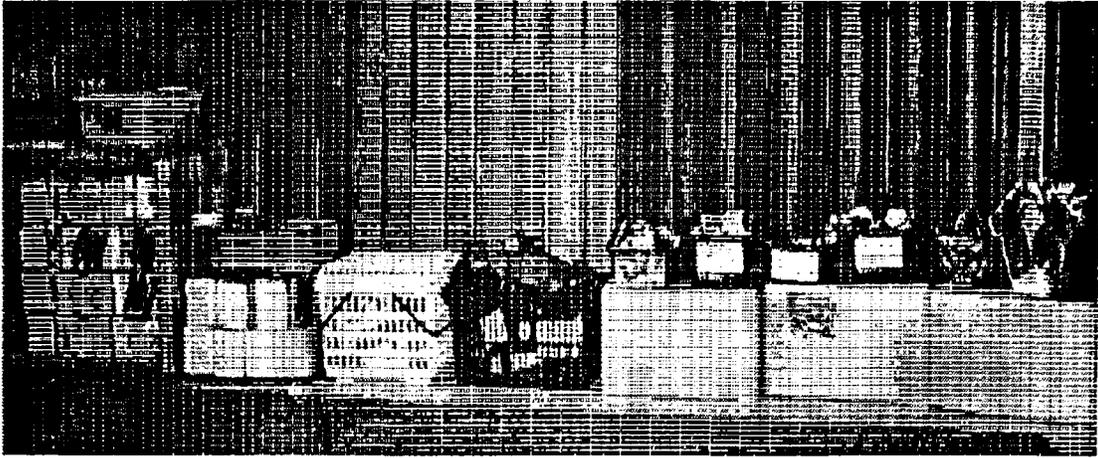


Figure 5. Easily accessible material and equipment.

Note. From: Personal collection of photographs by Terri Cody.

learn in a secure environment. Attention must be given to cleanliness. Regular inspections need to be made to repair or remove broken or dangerous materials and equipment.

- For some children being with large groups of children for an entire day is stressful. Children need a private area for a retreat. Children have a right to privacy and a soft, quiet area allows an individual to have the solitude which may be required when the noise or activity becomes too overwhelming. Refer to Figure 6.

Once the overall environment is designed, attention needs to be given to specific play areas.

#### Learning and Play Areas that Support Children's Learning

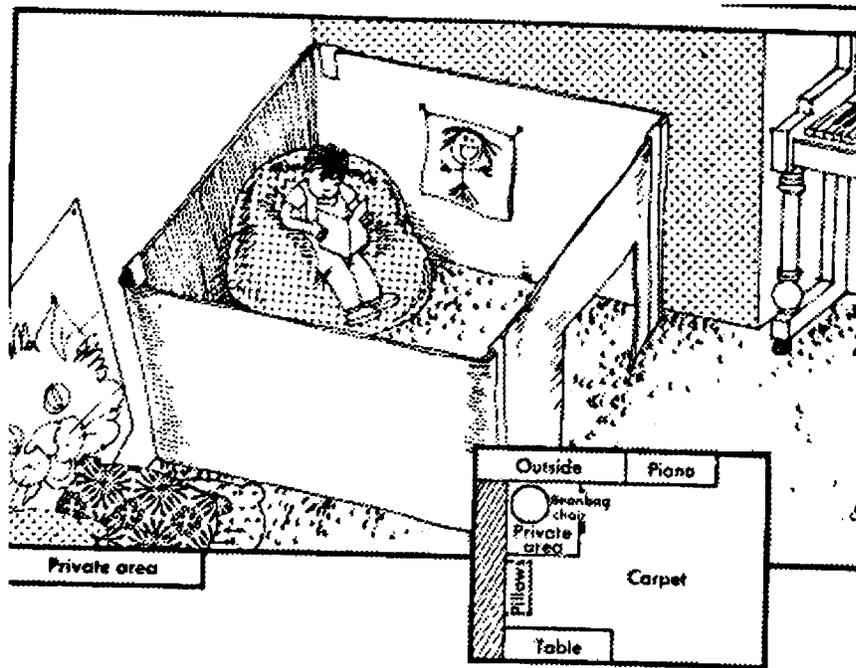
In most early childhood settings, space is organized into learning centres, interest centres, play areas or activity centres. These areas may include:

Blocks

Housekeeping and Dramatic Play

- Art
- Music
- Library (or Book Area)
- Science, Discovery and Nature
- Manipulatives/Table Toys
- Woodworking
- Sand , Water
- Gross Motor Area

These play areas or activity centres should be well defined with boundaries on three sides to allow children to play without interference from others. Low dividers, benches, shelves or carpets may be used to define



**Figure 6.** A private area for children.

**Note.** From: Guidance of Young Children (p. 87) by M. Marion, 1991, Toronto: Collier Macmillan. Copyright 1991 by Macmillan Publishing Company.

areas. Provide sufficient space and table or rug areas for convenient use of materials. As well, provide a variety of materials and activities to meet differing needs, abilities and interests. Differences in energy levels, thinking styles, social interaction styles, and cultural diversity need consideration. (Catron & Allen, 1993, p. 79).

Consider the lighting required for different activities. An art area should have natural lighting. The book and manipulative areas need full-intensity lighting. Dimmer switches will allow you to control lighting in different areas. "Children tend to be quieter and more socially interactive in less than full-intensity light" (Kostelnik, Soderman & Whiren, 1993, p. 261).

Well planned activity areas encourage children to develop self-control, independence, competence, and prosocial behaviours. These characteristics are encouraged when the ECE setting offers:

- \* a wide variety of activities that occur during the day
- \* a consistent schedule to the day's activities
- \* activities which require hands-on involvement
- \* choices for children. (Marion, 1991)

A well-organized physical environment which offers varied play areas and meets children's needs contributes to children's development.

## Creating A Culturally Sensitive Environment

In recent years increased attention has been given to the importance of respect for individual children and their families by being culturally sensitive and designing an anti-bias environment. A 1993 Alberta study by the Alberta Association for Young Children (AAYC) was undertaken to identify the need for cultural diversity in child care settings. The study found that nearly one million Albertans have an ethnic origin other than French or English and one in every six Albertans is foreign-born (LaGrange, Clark & Munroe, 1994).

AAYC sent surveys to licensed child care centres in Alberta (with 195 returned surveys) and discovered that 26% of the centres have at least one child who speaks no English and 74% of the centres stated that they have children who speak English and another language. Children in the centres come from 63 countries and speak more than 56 different languages. Eight-four percent of the caregivers who responded speak English and another language. Sixty-one percent of the centres adjust, adapt or design their program for children of diverse cultures. The AAYC concluded that cultural sensitivity is required in child care settings. Therefore, the AAYC will be designing a culturally sensitive program for implementation in Alberta child care centres. A program that is currently being practiced in many child care settings is the NAEYC anti-bias curriculum.

### The Anti-Bias Curriculum

An anti-bias curriculum differs from a multicultural curriculum. In a multicultural curriculum the children are introduced to differing cultures through special events (such as celebrating Chinese New Year or Hanukkah). These activities are separated from the ongoing daily curriculum and the everyday lives of children. In an anti-bias curriculum,

multicultural experiences are "integrated into rather than added onto existing curriculum" (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p. 8).

The aims of the anti-bias curriculum include:

- to respect the uniqueness of each child and the varied cultural, family, and social backgrounds of the children in the centre.
- to foster positive self-esteem and allow each child to achieve to her/his full potential.
- to increase children's awareness of cultural diversity.
- to reduce stereotypical gender or cultural images and behaviours. (Derman-Sparks, 1989)

Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (1989) label a multicultural curriculum a tourist curriculum which is:

patronizing, emphasizing the 'exotic' differences between cultures, and trivializing, dealing not with the real-life daily problems and experiences of different peoples, but with surface aspects of their celebration and modes of entertainment. Children 'visit' non-White cultures and then 'go home' to the daily classroom, which reflects only the dominant culture. The focus on holidays, although it provides drama and delight for both children and adults, given the impression that is all 'other' people - usually people of color - do. What it fails to communicate is real understanding (page 7).

To set up a successful anti-bias curriculum, the teacher needs to analyze all aspects of the curriculum to ensure that the dominant white culture does not overpower and predominate and to ensure that all cultural groups, physically challenged children and adults, men and women, and boys and girls are not presented in a stereotypical limited way. Instead, each person is viewed as a unique and valued individual with similarities and differences.

According to Derman-Sparks (1989), to create an anti-bias environment, the teacher is challenged to:

- increase materials that reflect children and adults who are of color, who are differently abled, and who are engaged in non-stereotypic gender activities.
- eliminate stereotyped and inaccurate materials from daily use.
- provide materials, pictures and displays which represent all people in a variety of roles, activities, and family structures. Provide images "which depict people of visible minorities in both Canadian and international contexts" (Chud & Fahlman, 1986, p. 84).
- analyze interactions with children. Are all children treated with respect and are they valued for their uniqueness? Are girls and boys treated in non-stereotypical ways?

There are many different ways to implement an anti-bias curriculum in a child care setting. The following list offers some concrete suggestions for a culturally sensitive, play-based environment. These suggestions have been chosen and adapted from: Cech, 1990; Chud & Fahlman, 1985; Derman-Sparks, 1989; McLeod, 1984; & York, 1991.

#### Housekeeping and Dramatic Play Centre

- Provide materials, clothing, equipment, and food packaging which reflect cultural diversity and different economic groups and occupations. For example, include chopsticks, a wok, and a tortilla press in the kitchen.

- Provide different kinds of combs and brushes.
- Include varied materials and decorations which reflect holiday celebrations for all cultural groups.
- Include different occupational materials such as an adding machine, coveralls, tool box, briefcase, and hard hats.
- Provide materials and props which reflect the children's home lives. For example, have children bring in empty boxes and cans from foods they use at home.
- Provide materials, clothing, and equipment which encourage boys and girls to play a variety of roles. A doctor's kit could include a label such as "Dr. Stephanie Chan". Provide recipe charts which illustrate both men and women cooking.
- Provide authentic-looking dolls and clothing of differing cultures. Provide male and female dolls and dolls with disabilities. Include a native Canadian cradleboard and a hammock for the dolls.
- Provide materials which allow children to explore equipment and tools used by people with special needs: crutches, wheelchairs, a walker, cane, hearing aids, and Braille signs and books.
- Include varied kinds of clothing, shoes, and hats. Provide various lengths of materials (silks, cottons, wools) for children to create their own dress-up clothes.

### Music

- Provide musical instruments and costumes which represent different cultures.
- Provide songs, music, and dance which reflect varied styles and languages. Teach children the same song in different languages including Sign Language.

- Provide materials which allow children to create their own instruments.

### Manipulatives/Table Toys

- Provide materials which depict diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, and occupations. Create your own puzzles, matching games, and card games which represent people, places, and materials from a variety of countries. Use pictures from magazines such as: Young Children, Ms., Life, Japan and National Geographic World. Organizations such as UNICEF may be able to provide appropriate materials.
- Some resource books which may be helpful for making learning materials include:

Debelak, M., Herr, J. and Jacobson, M. (1981). Creating innovative classroom materials for teaching young children.

Baratta-Lorton, M. (1975). Workjobs for parents Activity-centered learning in the home. California: Addison-Wesley.

Baratta-Lorton, M. (1972). Workjobs. Activity-centered learning for early childhood education. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

- Purchase materials, toys and games from various countries. In Lethbridge, culturally diverse materials including toys, dolls, and musical instruments are available from Global Crafts (MCC Self Help Crafts) in Centre Village Mall.
- When purchasing materials such as small people figures, ensure men and women from varied backgrounds are represented.

### Art

- Provide art materials (paint, play dough, paper, crayons and markers) that allow children to accurately portray their skin, hair and eye colour. Many

educational suppliers sell crayons, paints, paper and yarn which allow accurate representation of ethnic groups.

- Provide varied materials such as origami and rice paper and Chinese brushes.
- Provide collage materials which include colors, patterns and textures which represent different cultures. Have fabric scraps of imported cloth and pictures of people from different cultures for collage projects.

### Snack Time

- On a regular basis, offer cooking experiences and foods from around the world. However, avoid stereotyped ideas that may cause children to believe such stereotypes that all Mexicans eat tacos or all Orientals use chopsticks.
- Expand children's viewpoints to help them realize that all cultural groups eat foods which are the same. Serve different kinds of bread: bagels, scones, pita, bannock, and croissants. Have children prepare a fruit salad with fruits from different countries (mango, pineapple, papaya, oranges, tangerines).
- Introduce children to foods from many countries (such as sugar cane and coconuts).

### Library/ Book Area

- Choose books which reflect diversity and avoid books which present stereotyped images.
- When reading stories, change the wording and gender of characters so that males and females are represented in different roles.
- Offer myths, fairy tales, and folklore from other cultures.

Provide books, signs, posters, finger plays and story tapes which introduce children to a variety of languages. Also, use words in many languages on a regular basis. Include Sign Language and Braille.



Figure 7. Display words in many languages.

Note. From: Personal collection of photographs by Terri Cody.

- In storytelling, use puppets and felt board characters which represent differing cultural groups. Vary the settings and plots of your stories. The resource book Multicultural Folktales: Stories to tell Young Children by Judy Sierra (1991) provides ideas for storytelling, flannel board figures to make, and ideas for puppetry and participation. The ideas presented in this book will be helpful for various stories and may trigger ideas for manipulative materials, props, and accessories for different play areas. This resource book is available at the Lethbridge Public Library and the University of Lethbridge library.  
There are many children's books which present non-stereotyped or alternative images. Appendix A lists books which are available at the Lethbridge Public Library.

### Sand and Water Play

- Use shells, sticks, leaves, flowers, and rocks to allow children to explore the natural environment.
- Provide bamboo and mesh wire scoops, water wheels, wisks, and steame baskets.
- Use boats which are found in different environments (kayaks, canoes, sailboats, steam boats, motor boats, and fishing boats).
- Display pictures of water in different environments (waterfalls, rivers, oceans, and lakes).

### Carpentry/Woodworking

- Display pictures of various styles of architecture and people using a variety of tools, implements and materials for constructions.
- Provide varied kinds of wood and accessories.

### Block Play

- Create large floor maps of varied settings: for example a desert, jungle, tropical forest, or ocean scene. Provide rubber, plastic, wooden, or cloth animals to enhance the play.
- Include transportation toys such as trains, buses, double-decker buses, planes, jets, cars, horses and carts, ferries, barges, canoes, and sleds.
- Provide multi-ethnic, nonsexist wooden play figures and dolls.
- Add varied materials to enhance the kinds of structures which can be built. Use cardboard, boxes, canvas, string, and masking tape.
- Display pictures of various kinds of buildings: pagoda, tree house, adobe cabin, tent, and hut.

## Resource Books

There are many innovative ideas for providing a culturally sensitive play environment. Highly recommended resource books to expand on your ideas are:

- Cech, M. (1990). Globalchild: Multicultural Resources for Young Children. Ottawa: Health and Welfare Canada.
- Chud, G. & Fahlman, R. (1985). Early Childhood Education For a Multicultural Society. A Handbook for Educators. Vancouver, BC.: WEDGE Publishers, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia.
- Derman-Sparks, L. & the A.B.C. Task Force. (1989). Anti-Bias Curriculum - Tools for Empowering Young Children. Washington, DC.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Graeme, J. & Fahlman, R. (1990). Hand in Hand. Multicultural Experiences for Young Children. Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley. This Hand in Hand series is designed for three-to-eight year olds. The program includes nine children's books with text in four languages - English, French, Spanish and Chinese and colour photographs of children from varied ethnic groups. Topics such as clothing, transportation, food, homes, plants and animals and community are examined. The Teacher's Resource Book provides concrete ideas for activities and includes extensive bibliographies for children's books, toys and materials.
- York, S. (1991). Roots and Wings Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs. Minnesota: Redleaf Press. In this book, in addition to providing many concrete ideas for affirming children's cultures there are questionnaires and activities which encourage adults to examine their own feelings and attitudes toward cultural sensitivity.

## Adults' Roles in Play

"Play is children's world, and adults who take it over are denying children's need to invent it for themselves. Yet children benefit from adults' ideas, and adults benefit from being free to do things they like to do. That's how energy is created and sustained, and adults working in child care need all the energy they can find. For the most part, appropriate adult play in group programs takes place around the periphery of the children's action - in setting the stage, adding props and dramatic ideas, helping with problem solving, observing and talking about children's good ideas, and inventing new plans based on those observations. It's a delicate balance, sustained primarily by observing children, observing oneself, and being open to questions from other observers in a continuing process of reflection and dialogue" (Jones, 1993, p. 30).

### Supporting Children's Play

As the above quote illustrates, a play centered program requires adults who can support and enhance play without imposing their own expectations and external goals on play behavior. Roles that adults take on in a learning through play environment differ significantly from the roles of adults in a formal, teacher-directed environment. To support play, adults must be facilitators, supporters, and guides (Wolfgang, 1974) and occasional co-authors, supportive connoisseurs, and nurturant editors (Fromberg, 1990). Gordon & Browne (1993) state that in order to establish play as an important part of the

curriculum, adults need to “focus on the process of learning rather than on the process of teaching” (p. 371). Jones (1993) expands on this idea: “Adults itching to play teacher are likely to interrupt children’s play for the sake of their own wonderful ideas” (p. 30).

To facilitate, support and enhance play adults need to:

- provide open-ended materials which are easily accessible to children.
- be open-minded and non judgmental.
- accept self-expression and creativity.
- provide a relaxed, flexible learning environment.
- support curiosity, risk-taking and innovative problem solving techniques.
- accept and support novel ideas.
- accept independent, assertive, challenging thinkers.
- have a playful and spontaneous attitude.
- respond positively to unique and unusual thinking.
- trust in the process of play and believe that play is learning.

(Wassermann, 1992; Catron & Allen, 1993)

For many adults, their own experiences with school make it difficult for them to take on the attitudes and roles required to support play. Some adults believe that children cannot be trusted to play productively without adult intervention and manipulation. They become “so eager to use play as a medium for teaching that they cannot resist overmanipulating it in order to provide a *good learning experience* ” (Hendrick, 1992, p. 353). This need to teach and instruct ends children’s opportunities for pure play by turning spontaneous interests of children into lessons (Elkind 1987; 1988). Play

becomes work by interrupting, interfering, questioning, and formalizing play. When adults manipulate play, intervene when they are not needed or wanted, and try to teach children what they believe is important, then the children's agenda, their meaningful learning, and the true benefits of play are lost.

### The Role of Observation in Children's Play

By observing children at play, an adult reinforces the value of play by showing that it is worth an adult's time. Adults need to become careful, astute observers as observation plays a key role in understanding children's play. By observing children's play activities, adults discover children's interests, learning styles, and problem solving skills; as well, adults can examine children's ability to interact with others. Observations of children help adults determine what materials and experiences are needed, what materials are no longer of interest to the children, and what changes need to be made in the environment. Based on observations, adults can adapt, change, or extend play areas as needed. Observations help adults determine when to intervene or help children and when to allow children to proceed on their own (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey, 1987). Observation allows adults to follow the interests, ideas, and needs of children.

### Involvement in Play

For many adults, it is difficult to decide when and how to become involved in play and when to remain outside the activity. At times the adult's goal differs from the child's intentions as shown in Figure 8.

However, through observation and reflection, adults can become quite skilled in determining appropriate and inappropriate times for becoming involved in play and in utilizing effective intervention techniques. When children are playing in an organized, productive manner, cooperating with

peers, freely using language, solving problems on their own, and showing interest and enthusiasm, then adult intervention can be disruptive and interfering (Trawick-Smith, 1994).



Figure 8. Differing viewpoints of play.

Note. From: The Calgary Herald, Saturday, July 30, 1994.

There are other times that adults should not become involved in play:  
 “not ever *if* you feel you are intruding (and you may be), or if you feel it is a duty (for their ‘own good’), or if you are too grumpy, preoccupied, or just plain exhausted to enjoy the fun you are supposed to be having together (Sutton-Smith & Sutton-Smith, 1974, p. 232).

Sometimes, children will clearly illustrate what they believe the adult’s role should be in their play. Children will often ask: “You want to play with me?” or “You be the daddy, but you have to talk like this” or “Pretend you’re

the cat who just got in trouble”. When adults become play partners, they need to support the children’s ideas and follow their lead. Children are denied their rights to learn that they are competent people with good ideas if “adults whose need to play a starring role leads them to ignore the fact that play is the children’s turf, which needs to be entered with care” (Jones, 1993, p. 30).

Adults do become involved in play activities and there are times adults need to intervene. There are times when hesitant children need help entering into play situations or children’s arguments and problems are not being solved by the children themselves or one child or a small group of children are being exploitative, domineering or disruptive (Gordon & Browne, 1993).

As shown in Table Two, there are questions that adults can consider to determine if their involvement in play is effective and supportive or ineffective and disruptive. Questioning one’s involvement in children’s play is an ongoing process and attention needs to be given to whether one’s involvement supports the child’s point of view and allows children to maintain control over their activities or whether the adult’s views and needs dominate. Adults need to examine their attitudes and responses to children’s activities to determine whether they provide children with a trusting, secure, and psychologically safe environment in which play is embraced and encouraged. Appendix B: “The Adult’s Role in Play: A Tool for Self-Evaluation” is an effective tool to examine and reflect on one’s own role in play.

Table Two

Adults' Role in Play: Intervention Techniques

Effective Intervention	Ineffective Intervention
Will my involvement <b>support</b> the children's play?	Will my involvement <b>inhibit</b> the children's play?
Am I <b>extending</b> the children's viewpoints?	Am I <b>imposing</b> my adult ideas and points of view on the children?
Am I <b>following</b> the children's lead and direction?	Am I <b>interrupting</b> the flow of the play?
Do I allow the <b>children</b> to have <b>control</b> ?	Do I <b>control</b> play?
Am I <b>enriching</b> play?	Am I <b>disrupting</b> play?
Do I encourage <b>learning</b> through play?	Do I impose adult directed <b>teaching</b> on the children?
Do I <b>respect</b> children's learning and play by allowing children to continue at their own pace?	Do I <b>disrespect</b> children's learning and play by interrupting children?
Do I allow <b>children</b> time to <b>solve problems</b> and work out disagreements on their own?	Do I <b>solve problems</b> for children before they have time to work out their own solutions?
Do I encourage <b>cooperation, respect and understanding</b> of other people?	Do I encourage <b>competition and disrespect</b> of other people?
Am I <b>guiding</b> play based on the children's ideas?	Am I <b>dominating and directing</b> play?

## Adults as Partners

There are times to become involved in play because it is enjoyable and your involvement as a play partner will enhance the play. For example:

*Antonia, Karen and Trevor have created a train with long hollow blocks and a steering wheel. Trevor assumes the role of conductor and the children take a trip to the Dairy Queen and return to the block area.*

*Trevor says: "We are home. Everyone go home to bed." They get off the train. Trevor leaves the play area. Antonia says, "But it's my turn to drive the train."*

Through observation, the caregiver, Surjit is aware that Antonia has difficulty standing up for her rights in play and knows that if she does not get her turn, then tears and screams may follow. Surjit is pleased to see Antonia verbally express her desire for a turn and is concerned that Karen may not continue the play. Surjit does not want to take over the play but she wants to extend the play so Antonia can take her turn as driver. The play continues:

*Surjit asks, "Where are you going now, Antonia?"*

*"I don't know," responds Antonia in a quiet voice. She sighs.*

*Surjit responds: "I wonder where we can go now? Hmm..." She goes over to housekeeping and puts on a scarf and hat as Karen and Antonia watch.*

*"I know!" says Karen. "Let's go to Grandma's."*

*Antonia smiles. She puts on the conductor's hat and announces, "All aboard!" Karen jumps on the train.*

Surjit is concerned that Karen and Antonia may not be able to independently continue the activity. She has observed the two children on

previous occasions and noted they had difficulty carrying out a sequence of actions in pretend play. So Surjit decides to continue as a play partner.

*“May I come to Grandma’s too?” Surjit asks. “I need to bring her some flower seeds for her garden.”*

*Antonia and Karen reply together: “Sure, come on!”*

*Antonia, in her role of conductor, gets off the train and comes over to Surjit. She leads her by the arm and says, “You’ll have to sit here.” Surjit sits where directed.*

*Antonia asks: “Is everyone ready?” and Surjit and Karen respond, “Yes.” Antonia begins a train noise, Karen joins in and Surjit follows. After a few seconds, Antonio says: “Stop. We’re here.”*

Surjit realizes that Karen and Antonio are not sure what to do next.

Surjit decides to take on a new role.

*She jumps off the train, rearranges the hat and scarf and faces Karen and Antonia.*

*She says: “How kind of you to come and visit. Come in, come in, you must be thirsty. Let’s have juice and cookies.”*

*Antonia and Karen smile and giggle following Surjit to the housekeeping centre.*

Once Surjit, Karen and Antonio reach the housekeeping center and begin preparing the snack, Surjit leaves and allows the children to pursue their own activity. Surjit realized that she had started to lead and take over the play. She had extended the children’s ideas but she knew it was time to allow the children to carry on in their own way.

Surjit’s involvement in children’s play helps children learn play skills, extends play, and shows children she believes that play is important. Surjit’s

involvement illustrates how an adult can model play, become a participant in play, and guide play without imposing her own ideas on the children.

There are other times when adults can become involved in play without controlling the play. Adults can take on roles of extenders, models, and responders (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993).

### Adults as Extenders

Adults can extend children's play by adding new materials or props or by asking questions that elaborate on the children's ideas (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993). In some instances, the caregiver can add props and materials to a Dramatic Play centre. Donna set up an airport Dramatic Play area with a plane (made from a large cardboard box), suitcases and a pilot's hat. Through observation, she discovered that children do play in the area but often only one child at a time and for brief periods of time. Donna added an airline ticket counter with a phone, cash register, play money, paper, pencils, and tickets. She expanded the plane by adding a control panel (computer keyboard), another pilot's hat, and another chair to make a cockpit. She placed chairs behind the cockpit and added dress-up clothes. By adding these materials, more children played cooperatively in the area and their play was expanded and extended. Children took on varied roles and carried out complex dramatic play scenarios.

Adults' questions and ideas can extend play quite considerably.

*Jolanda (4.2 years) and Martina (4.5 years) spent a great deal of time building a house with unit blocks and hollow blocks. Jolanda addresses Elisha, the caregiver: "Guess what, we're going in our house now."*

*Elisha replies, "Oh, is there room for me to come and visit?"*

*Martina crawls inside the house. "OH, this house is squishy," she says.*

*Jolanda responds: "There's no room for me. We need to make it bigger."*

*Jolanda and Martina begin reconstructing the house. They use varied materials and solve various problems.*

As the children are playing cooperatively, solving problems on their own and continuing their constructive play without any difficulty, arguments or insurmountable problems, Elisha did not intervene. However, when the children did face a problem they could not solve and asked Elisha for help, she did offer assistance.

*Martina and Jolanda attempt to put a roof on their house. They discover, through trial and error, that there are no blocks left which are long enough for the roof. Martina approaches Elisha for assistance. Martina explains their difficulty and Elisha suggests they use a blanket for a roof. Martina, Jolanda and Elisha construct the roof. Elisha follows up on the children's ideas for securing the roof. Once completed Martina and Jolanda went inside the house.*

As Elisha had been observing the children and was aware of their play activity, she was able to intervene appropriately when asked and realized the children could work out a solution for constructing a roof once they were given an appropriate idea. She did not completely take over the play but became a play partner.

Adults can also help children understand and elaborate on their play by recording children's play in words, photographs and illustrations. Jones and Reynolds (1992) calls this the adult's role as *scribe*. Adults can take pictures of

the children's play and ask children to describe the pictures and their play. The children's words are written down and the pictures, together with the children's descriptions, are displayed for the children and parents. Adults could also draw representations of children's play activities. For example, children's block structures can be drawn or their play activities sketched and these representations can be shared and discussed with the children. Oral language skills are developed as they discuss their play and written language as a means of communication is modeled.

### Adults as Models

There are times that adults can join in play, model behaviors (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993) or help a child use materials or equipment without disrupting children's play.

*Curtis (2.3 years) is at the water table. He picks up a bottle with a narrow opening and tries to fill it up with a small butter container which is full of water. The opening of the bottle was too narrow and Curtis could not get any water in the bottle.*

Jeff, the caregiver, realizes Curtis is becoming frustrated. To avoid frustration and possible aggressive behavior, Jeff introduces a new piece of equipment.

*Jeff brings out a funnel. "Curtis," he says, "Look at this." Jeff puts the funnel over a bottle and uses a small cup to pour water into the funnel. Curtis watches the water go into the bottle.*

*"MINE," Curtis shouts and he grabs the funnel.*

*"Are you going to fill your bottle using the funnel?" asks Jeff.*

*"MINE," Curtis responds.*

*Curtis begins to use the funnel to fill the bottle. When the bottle overflows, Curtis empties the bottle and starts again. He continues the activity for ten minutes.*

Through modeling the use of the funnel, Jeff extended Curtis' play and enabled Curtis to be successful. However, if Curtis had decided not to use the funnel, Jeff would not have required him to do so.

Adults can also model appropriate play behavior when children have difficulty entering a play area without disrupting the play or when children tend to remain on the outside of play looking in. Adults can become play partners and ease the children into play.

*Alex had been sitting by the entrance of the restaurant area for approximately five minutes. Phyllis, a volunteer parent, notices Alex's interest in the play and approaches him. "Do you want to go in the restaurant, Alex?" Alex nodded yes.*

*"Well, let's pretend we're going for lunch," says Phyllis.*

*They entered the restaurant area, were given menus, had pizza and were given a bill. Phyllis carried on a discussion with Alex and the other children during the play. When they received their bill, Phyllis suggested to Alex that it was time to go. Alex said, "I want to stay here." Phyllis suggested that Alex ask one of the children if he could play with them. When Alex did not receive a response from any of the children playing in the area, Phyllis suggested that Alex could be the receptionist and cashier. The other children readily agreed. After a few minutes at the desk, Alex was involved in the play with others as a cook, server, and cashier.*

By modeling play skills, Phyllis is helping Alex learn how to enter a dramatic play area, how to use his language to become involved, and how to interact with others in play.

### Adults as Responders

Adults can respond to children's play in varied ways: asking questions, making suggestions, adding new information, giving hints to solve problems, introducing new concepts, and helping children ask other children for materials. Providing immediate, direct feedback allows children to think about their play in new ways. It is important that adults remain non judgmental and avoid instructing, commanding, and drilling children (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1993 & Trawick-Smith, 1994).

For example:

*Ding Fang is at the water table. She is blowing with straws to move ping-pong balls across the water and to sink floating objects.*

The caregiver, Patrice, has noticed Ding Fang has repeated this activity for several days and wants to present new challenges.

*Patrice observes the play for a few minutes then asks: "I wonder if you can make the balls move faster." and "What do you think might happen if you use two straws?" Ding Fang continues exploring the materials for much of the morning (Adapted from Trawick-Smith, 1994, p. 8).*

Patrice did not give specific directions or commands but offered new ideas to allow Ding Fang to expand on her explorations.

Adults can make suggestions which enhance or extend play.

*Miraka (3.2 years) is pushing an empty stroller around the room. The caregiver says: "Maybe you could put a dolly in the buggy and take the baby for a walk".*

*A group of children have built a structure from cardboard boxes. One child says: "What do we do now?"*

*The others respond, "I don't know."*

*The caregiver, who has been observing the play, says: "Why don't you see if you can find some different kinds of blocks to add to your structure?"*

*The children turn and look at the shelves. One child shrieks: "Hey, why don't we use the coloured wooden blocks too!" The other children agree and they begin to add to their original structure.*

Questions, suggestions and ideas should be worded carefully so that problem solving, concept development, curiosity, exploratory behavior, and language skills are enhanced. Open-ended questions which require more than one word answers encourage deeper thought processes and more language (Trawick-Smith, 1994). For example, begin questions with:

"I wonder..."

"What would happen if..."

"Is there another way..."

"Why did that happen?"

"How did you figure that out?"

These open-ended questions encourage children to think about their play and encourage them to discuss their play.

If adults “drill” children for correct answers or to teach number facts or concepts about shape, size, or colour, then children’s learning through play is inhibited. Play becomes a lesson and the children’s own goals are lost.

Becoming involved in children’s play requires thoughtful, reflective adults who understand children’s play and can make informed decisions about when to become involved in play and when to remain outside the play. Careful observations of children’s play helps adults determine when and how to intervene in children’s play. Adults can become involved in children’s play in various ways - adults can join in play when asked to do so by the children, extend play by adding materials, model play behaviors or the use of materials, ask open-ended questions, or offer new information. Through observation, adults can discover when and how to become involved in play and when to avoid intervention.

## Conclusion

Play is a significant activity in the lives of children. Play is learning and children require long periods of time to play to maximize their learning, independence and enjoyment. There are six essential criteria which define play. These criteria can be used to determine if an early childhood program offers sufficient opportunities for play.

The developmental interactionist philosophy supports learning through play. Adults will support play if they believe that children require relevant, meaningful activities and opportunities to explore materials and concepts in an active manner.

An understanding of the historical perspectives of play and the research regarding the value of play contribute to an understanding of the need for play to maximize children's developmental needs. Play contributes to all aspects of children's development. Language skills, physical development and cognitive skills are enhanced through play. Play helps children understand their emotions and fears and deal with stress. Self-esteem, autonomy and independence are enhanced through play. Play contributes significantly to children's social skills. Play allows children to be creative.

A supportive, well organized physical environment with varied play areas will meet children's needs and contribute to their overall development. An anti-bias, culturally sensitive curriculum shows respect for all children. Providing varied materials and activities which respect all cultures enhances the early childhood setting.

A play-centered early childhood environment requires adults who support and enhance play without imposing adult goals and expectations on

children. Adults need to trust in the process of play. Observations of children help adults understand play and adapt the environment to meet children's needs. Adults can extend, enhance, and support play without taking over or turning play into an adult directed activity. Ongoing personal reflection helps adults make informed decisions about their roles in play.

Play is significant for young children. A six-year-old child said: "Play is just what I do when I want to do it." As adults we have a responsibility to provide the time, space, materials, and attitudes which support play. We need to allow children to "just do it".

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## Appendix A

### Books That Support a Culturally Sensitive Environment

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	LETHBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY CALL NUMBER
Adoff, Arnold	1973	Black is Brown is Tan	P ADO
Adoff, Arnold	1991	Hard to Be Six	P ADO
Alexander, Sally Hobart	1992	Mom's Best Friend	J 362.41A
Anders, Rebecca	1976	A Look at Prejudice and Understanding	J303.385A
Andrews, Jan	1985	Very Last First Time	P AND
Baker, Olaf	1981	Where the Buffaloes Begin	J 398.208997B
Bang, Betsy	1978	Tuntuni, The Tailor Bird	J 398.20954 B
Bang, Molly	1985	The Paper Crane	P BAN
Bang, Molly	1983	Ten, Nine, Eight	P BAN
Bang, Molly	1983	Dawn	P BAN
Bauer, Caroline	1981	My Mom Travels a Lot	P BAU
Bernhard, Emery	1993	Spotted Eagle and Black Crow A Lakota Legend	J398.208997B
Blood, Charles & Martin Link	1976	The Goat in the Rug	P BLO
Bourgeois, Paulette & Bill Slavin	1990	Too Many Chickens	J PBK
Brown, Tricia	1984	Someone Special, Just Like You	P BRO
Caines, Jeannette	1988	I Need a Lunchbox	P CAI
Caines, Jeannette	1982	Just Us Women	P CAI
Caines, Jeannette	1977	Daddy	P CAI
Cairo, Shelley	1985	Our Brother Has Down's Syndrome	J649.152C
Children's Television Network	1980	Sesame Street Sign Language Fun	J419S

Cleaver, Elizabeth	1985	The Enchanted Caribou	J398.20899719C
Clifton, Lucille	1983	Everett Anderson's Goodbye	P CLI
Coutant, Helen	1974	First Snow	P COU
Daly, Niki	1985	Not So Fast, Songololo	P DAL
Delton, Judy	1980	My Mother Lost Her Job Today	P DEL
De Paola, Tomie	1983	The Legend of the Bluebonnet	J 398.2089973D
De Paola, Tomie	1981	Now One Foot, Now The Other	P DEP
Esbensen, Barbara Juster	1988	The Star Maiden: An Ojibway Tale	J 398.208997E
Esbensen, Barbara Juster	1989	Ladder to the Sky	J 398.208997 E
Eyvindson, Peter	1993	The Missing Sun	J398.20899716E
Feelings, Tom & Greenfield, Eloise	1981	Daydreamers	P FEE
Feelings, Muriel and Tom	1971	Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book	P FEE
Friedman, Ina R.	1984	How My Parents Learned to Eat	P FRI
Greenberg, Polly	1981	I Know I'm Myself Because	P GRE
Greenfield, Eloise	1977	Africa Dream	P GRE
Greenspun, Adele	1991	Daddies	J 306.8742G
Gerstein, Mordicai	1983	Follow Me	P GER
Grifaconi, Ann	1986	The Village of Round and Square Houses	P GRI
Harrison, Ted	1982	A Northern Alphabet	P HARR
Heyman, Abigail & Saul, Wendy	1978	Butcher, Baker, Cabinet Maker Photographs of Women at Work	J 331.4 H
Hutchins, Pat	1993	My Best Friend	P HUT
Jeffers, Susan & Seattle, Chief	1991	Brother Eagle, Sister Sky	P SEA
Jenness, Aylette	1990	Families A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment and Love	J 306.8507473J
Jonas, Ann	1985	The Trek	P JON
Keats, Ezra Jack	1975	When You Were a Baby	P KEA

Keats, Ezra Jack	1962	The Snowy Day	P KEA
Keats, Ezra Jack	1967	Peter's Chair	P KEA
Klein, Norma	1973	Girls Can Be Anything	P KLE
Leaf, Munro	1936	The Story of Ferdinand	P LEA
Lee, Jeanne M.	1985	Toad is the Uncle of Heaven: A Vietnamese Folk Tale	J 398.209597L
Loh, Morag	1988	Tucking Mommy In	P LOH
Louie, Ai-Ling	1982	Yeh Shen: A Cinderella Story	J 398.2
Luenn, Nancy	1993	Songs for the Ancient Forest	P LUE
Luenn, Nancy	1992	Mother Earth	P LUE
Luenn, Nancy	1990	Nessa's Fish	P LUE
Martin, Bill	1991	Polar Bear, Polar Bear What Do You Hear?	P MAR
Martin, Bill	1987	Knots on a Counting Rope	P MAR
Martin, Bill	1983	Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?	P MAR
McGovern, Ann	1969	Black is Beautiful	J 811.54 MCG
Monjo, F. N.	1970	The Drinking Gourd	P MON
Morris, Ann & Heyman, Ken	1989	Hats. Hats. Hats.	P MOR
Moray, Jeremy	1980	Timmy, The West Coast Tug	P MOR
Munsch, Robert	1980	The Paper Bag Princess	P MUN
Peter, Diana	1976	Claire and Emma	J 362.428P
Peterson, Jeanne	1977	I Have A Sister, My Sister is Deaf	J 362.42P
Polacco, Patricia	1988	The Keeping Quilt	P POL
Quinlan, Patricia	1987	My Dad Takes Care of Me	P QUI
Rockwell, Anne	1981	When We Grow Up	P ROC
Rockwell, Harlow	1976	My Nursery School	P ROC
Rosen, Michael	1992	South and North and East and West. The Oxfam Book of Children's Stories	J 398.2S
Say, Allen	1991	Tree of Cranes	P SAY
Sheldon, Dyan	1990	The Whales' Song	P SHE
Showers, Paul	1965	Your Skin and Mine	J 612.791S
Sierra, Judy	1991	Multicultural Folktales: Stories to Tell Young Children	J 398.2S
Spier, Peter	1980	People	P SPI
Stinson, Kathy	1984	Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Anymore	P STI

Taylor, Carrie J.	1991	How Two-Feathers was Saved From Loneliness	J 398.2089973T
Taylor, Carrie J.	1991	The Ghost and Lone Warrior	J 398.2089973T
Truss, Jan	1987	Peter's Moccasins	P TRU
Tusa, Tricia	1984	Libby's New Glasses	P TUS
Vuong, Lynette Dyer	1982	The Brocaded Slipper and Other Vietnamese Tales	J 398.209597V
Waber, Bernard	1966	You Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus	P WAB
Walker, Alice	1991	Finding the Green Stone	P WAL
Wallace, Ian	1985	Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance	P WAL
Wandro, Mark	1981	My Daddy is a Nurse	J 331.702W
Waterton, Betty	1978	A Salmon for Simon	P WAT
Williams, Vera B.	1981	Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe	P WIL
Williams Vera B.	1983	Something Special for Me	P WIL
Wolf, Bernard	1977	Anna's Silent World	J.912W
Yarbrough, Camille	1979	Cornrows	P YAR
Yashima, Taro	1958	Umbrella	P YAS
Yashimo, Mitsu & Taro	1955	Crow Boy	P YAS
Zolotow, Charlotte	1972	William's Doll	P ZOL
Zolotow, Charlotte	1967	Summer Is ...	P ZOL

## Appendix B

### The Adult's Role In Play: A Tool For Self-Evaluation

#### Supporting the Child's Point of View

Do I allow the children to act on their own ideas?

Do I support the children's initiating activities and making choices? Or do I control how they play?

Do I use language for my benefit or the child's? Do I use language within the context of the child's natural life?

Do I allow the child to actively explore materials and activities?

Do I encourage the child to do as much for herself as possible?

Do I refrain from imposing my ideas and judgments on the child's play?

Do I test my involvement in the children's play by asking: "Does my involvement inhibit or enhance the play?"

Do I refrain from giving the children answers?

Do I view wrong answers as a reflection of children's thinking? Do I make use of wrong answers to help the child think more about something?

#### Supporting Play in Choice of Activities

Do I choose toys and materials that are open-ended and invite further exploration?

Do I allow the child to use a material, toy, or game in a way that is different from what I expected?

After suggesting how to use a material or game, do I allow the child to alter rules and structure it to suit his needs?

### Supporting the Child's Psycho-Social Needs

Do I encourage the children to negotiate rather than insisting on sharing or following arbitrary rules?

Do I let the children know that I approve of their efforts at fantasy play and do not interfere with it?

Do I help the children cope with frustrations in play (such as losing) by accepting their needs to regress to a more immature way of playing?

Do I refrain from interrupting play unnecessarily? Do I let the child know that I value her play?

Do I try to respond more to the child's *intentions* rather than his *actions* in an aggressive play situation?

Do I make sure the child has plenty of opportunity daily for unstructured play?

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