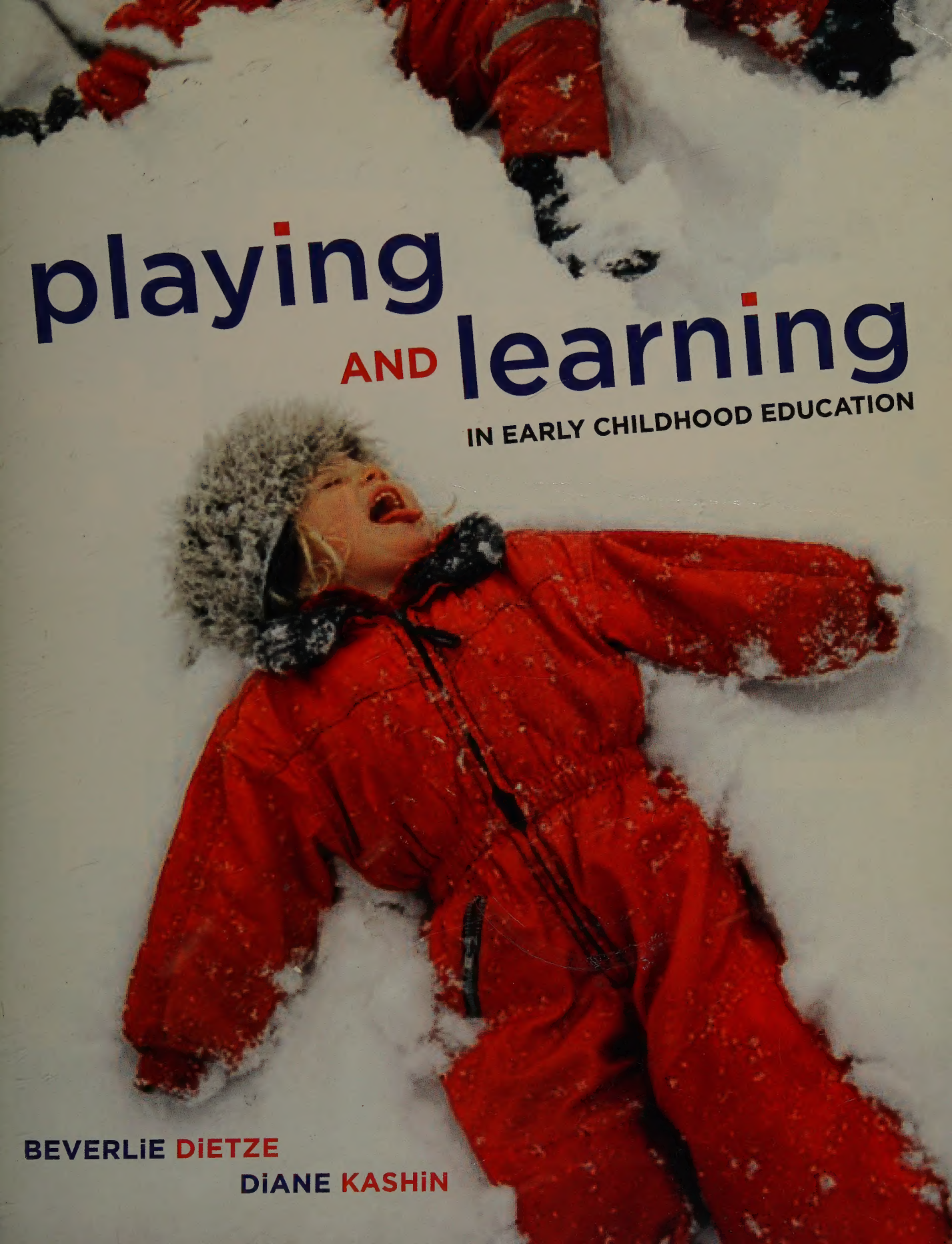




playing **AND** learning

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BEVERLIE **DIETZE**

DIANE **KASHIN**

playing AND learning

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BEVERLIE DIETZE MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

DIANE KASHIN SENECA COLLEGE

Pearson Canada
Toronto

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Dietze, Beverlie, 1957–

Playing and learning in early childhood education / Beverlie Dietze.

ISBN: 978-0-13-512546-5

1. Play—Textbooks. 2. Learning—Textbooks. 3. Early childhood education—Textbooks. I. Title.

LB1139.35.P55D53 2011

372.21

C2010-907559-5

Copyright © 2012 Pearson Canada Inc., Toronto, Ontario.

Pearson Prentice Hall. All rights reserved. This publication is protected by copyright and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise. For information regarding permission, write to the Permissions Department.

ISBN: 978-0-13-512546-5

Vice-President, Editorial Director: Gary Bennett

Editor-in-Chief: Ky Pruesse; Michelle Sartor

Editor, Humanities and Social Sciences: Joel Gladstone

Marketing Manager: Loula March

Developmental Editor: Rema Celio

Lead Project Manager: Söğüt Y. Güleç

Project Manager: Renata Butera, Central Publishing

Production Editors: Sudip Sinha, Aptara®, Inc.; Lila Campbell

Copy Editor: Deepak Arora

Proofreaders: Dheerendra Kumar Singh; Heath Lynn Silberfeld

Manufacturing Coordinator: Susan Johnson

Compositor: Aptara®, Inc.

Art Direction: Miguel Angel Acevedo

Interior Designer: Anthony Leung

Cover Designer: Opus House Inc./Sonya Thursby

Cover Image: Alamy Ltd.

For permission to reproduce other copyrighted material, the publisher gratefully acknowledges the copyright holders listed on page 437, which is considered an extension of this copyright page.

Statistics Canada information is used with the permission of Statistics Canada. Users are forbidden to copy the data and disseminate them, in an original or modified form, for commercial purposes, without permission from Statistics Canada. Information on the availability of the wide range of data from Statistics Canada can be obtained from Statistics Canada's Regional Offices, its World Wide Web site at www.statcan.gc.ca, and its toll-free access number 1-800-263-1136.

11 15 14

Printed and bound in Canada

PEARSON

Brief Contents

1 Exploring the Foundations of Play 1

I dedicate this book to my late mother, Eileen Lucy Arthurs and my late father, William Christie Arthurs, who knew intuitively the importance of their children having the freedom to play outdoors—in the woods, at the brook, on the lawn, and in playhouses. And to my childhood playmates, my sister, Myrna, and our late brother, Philip, who, collectively known as the three little ones by our siblings, shared new adventure, risk taking, intrigue, and surprise into our play and learning.

—B.D.

To the many students that I have taught over the years whose continued ability to see the learning in the play has been inspirational.

—D.K.

11 Music, Movement, and Play 339

12 Planning Play Space 364

13 Taking Play to the Next Level 384



Brief Contents

- 1 Exploring the Foundations of Play 1
- 2 The Process of Play 31
- 3 Observing and Documenting Children's Play 68
- 4 Dramatic Play 96
- 5 The Power of Outdoor Play 128
- 6 Blocks and Child's Play 169
- 7 Language, Emergent Literacy, and Play 201
- 8 Math and Science 237
- 9 Art and Play 274
- 10 Bringing Technology into Child's Play:
A New Perspective 308
- 11 Music, Movement, and Play 339
- 12 Planning Play Space 364
- 13 Taking Play to the Next Level 394



Contents

Preface

xxi

1

Exploring the Foundations of Play

1

Chapter Preview

2

The Origin of the Word *Play*

3

Defining Play

3

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

6

The Importance of Examining Societal Issues and Child's Play

8

Childhood Obesity

8

Outdoor Play

9

Technology

10

Culture

11

Consumerism

15

Poverty

16

Brain Development

18

An Overview of the Classical, Modern, and Contemporary Perspectives on Play

20

The Canadian Association for Young Children

Position Statement on Play for Young Children

24

CAYC Believes That It Is Important for Children to Play

25

CAYC Believes That Children Need Time to Play

25

CAYC Believes That Children Need Space to Play

25

CAYC Believes That Children Need Certain Materials for Play

26

CAYC Believes That Children Need Adults to Support and Enable Their Play

26

The Canadian Association for Young Children Position Statement on Play for School-Age Children

26

SUMMARY

27

REVIEW QUESTIONS

28

MAKING CONNECTIONS

29

ADDITIONAL READING

29

WEBLINKS

30

2	The Process of Play	31
	Chapter Preview	32
	Child's Play: From an Ecological Theory Perspective	33
	<i>Microsystem</i>	34
	<i>Mesosystem</i>	34
	<i>Exosystem</i>	35
	<i>Macrosystem</i>	35
	<i>Chronosystem</i>	35
	Components of Play and Unique Features of Play	36
	Play, Learning, and Intrinsic Motivation	37
	Play, Learning, and Active Engagement	41
	Play, Learning, and Play as a Process Rather than Product	41
	Characteristics of Play	46
	<i>Play Is Active (Henniger, 2002)</i>	46
	<i>Play Is Child-Initiated and Focused (Henniger, 2002)</i>	47
	<i>Play Is Process-Oriented (Bruner, 1972)</i>	47
	<i>Play Is Symbolic and Transformational</i>	48
	The Play Process	48
	Phase I: Body Play	48
	Phase II: Motoring Movement Play	49
	Phase III: Imaginative Play	49
	Phase IV: Intentional Imaginative Play	50
	Phase V: Peer Play with Rules	51
	Phase VI: Adult Play	52
	Classifying Play Experiences	52
	Piaget's Stages of Play	53
	Smilansky's Contributions to the Stages of Play	54
	<i>Constructive Play Stage (4 Years of Age and School Age)</i>	55
	Parten's Classifications of Social Play	55
	Seagoe's Contributions to Play	56
	Children and the Theories of Play	58
	Theories of Play	58
	Classical Theories	58
	Modern Theories	59
	Contemporary Theories	61
	Play and Children with Atypical Development	61
	The Roles of Early Learning Practitioners in Play	62
	Adult Participation in Child's Play	64
	SUMMARY	65
	REVIEW QUESTIONS	66
	MAKING CONNECTIONS	67

ADDITIONAL READING	67
--------------------	----

WEBLINKS	67
----------	----

3 Observing and Documenting Children's Play 68

Chapter Preview	69
-----------------	----

The Relationship of Observation to Play and Learning	70
--	----

At a Crossroads: Redefining Observation Processes	73
---	----

Observation and Pedagogical Documentation	75
---	----

Defining Observation	75
----------------------	----

Defining Pedagogical Documentation	76
------------------------------------	----

Examining the Difference Between Child Observation and Pedagogical Documentation	78
--	----

Moving Forward	79
----------------	----

Ways of Acquiring Information to Support Student Practitioners Understanding the Whole Child	80
--	----

Organize Your Observation Tools	80
---------------------------------	----

Develop Purposeful Observations	80
---------------------------------	----

Involve Children and Adults in Observations	80
---	----

Examine Information from Varying Perspectives	81
---	----

Recognize What Your Biases and Perceptions Are	81
--	----

Listen to the Children	81
------------------------	----

Review Documented Observations Many Times to Seek Meaning	81
---	----

Examine Children's Play Patterns and Actions	82
--	----

Examine How Children Co-construct Knowledge	82
---	----

Examine How Children Express Meaning and Representation	83
---	----

Examine the Observations to Determine the Level of Meta-Cognition the Child Exhibits	83
--	----

Examine Children's Play and Determine If and How It Should be Documented	84
--	----

Observation and Documentation Tools	85
-------------------------------------	----

Where Do Observations Occur?	85
------------------------------	----

Discovering Information and Understanding Children and Their Play	88
---	----

The Types of Discoveries Made through Watching, Listening, and Discussing Play with Children	90
--	----

SUMMARY	92
---------	----

REVIEW QUESTIONS	94
MAKING CONNECTIONS	94
ADDITIONAL READING	95
WEBLINKS	95

4 Dramatic Play 96

Chapter Preview	96
------------------------	----

Theoretical Foundation	97
-------------------------------	----

What Is Dramatic Play?	99
-------------------------------	----

Characteristics of Dramatic Play	102
----------------------------------	-----

Stages of Dramatic Play Development	103
-------------------------------------	-----

Experiences for Children in Dramatic Play across the Ages	104
---	-----

The Importance of Dramatic Play	105
---------------------------------	-----

Variations in Sociodramatic Play	107
----------------------------------	-----

The Role of the Early Learning Practitioner	108
--	-----

Observation and Documentation	110
--------------------------------------	-----

Planning and Facilitating Dramatic Play	111
---	-----

Types of Dramatic Play	113
------------------------	-----

<i>Story Play</i>	113
-------------------	-----

<i>Pantomime</i>	114
------------------	-----

<i>Puppets</i>	114
----------------	-----

<i>Story Drama</i>	115
--------------------	-----

<i>Teacher Theatre</i>	115
------------------------	-----

<i>Tools of the Mind</i>	116
--------------------------	-----

Provocations for Dramatic Play	118
--------------------------------	-----

Setting Up for Dramatic Play	118
------------------------------	-----

Time to Play	120
--------------	-----

Weaving Dramatic Play into the Early Learning	
--	--

Environment	121
--------------------	-----

Guns, War Play, and Superheroes	122
---------------------------------	-----

SUMMARY	123
---------	-----

REVIEW QUESTIONS	126
------------------	-----

MAKING CONNECTIONS	126
--------------------	-----

ADDITIONAL READING	127
--------------------	-----

WEBLINKS	127
----------	-----

5	The Power of Outdoor Play	128
	Chapter Preview	129
	Historical Perspective on Outdoor Play	131
	The Importance of Outdoor Play to Child Development	133
	Cognitive Development	135
	Social Development	135
	Emotional Development	136
	Physical Development and Movement	136
	Outdoor Play and Exposure to Natural Light	137
	Developing an Appreciation for Outdoor Play	138
	Risk Taking and Child's Play	140
	Planning Outdoor Play Spaces	143
	<i>Nature Zone</i>	144
	<i>Adventure Zone</i>	144
	<i>Active Play Zone</i>	145
	<i>Quiet Learning and Play Zone</i>	145
	Play Spaces for Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers and School-Age Children	146
	Examining the Use of Play Space	147
	Analyzing Play Spaces	148
	Outdoor Experience Centres	151
	Choosing Materials for Outdoor Play: Why Loose Parts	152
	Active Play	154
	Constructive Play Experience Centres	154
	Blocks	154
	Woodworking	154
	Art	154
	Discovery and Science	155
	Sociodramatic Play	156
	Games with Rules	156
	The Roles of Early Learning Practitioners in Outdoor Play	157
	Early Learning Practitioner Attitudes and Abilities	157
	Program Schedules for Outdoor Play	158
	Early Learning Practitioner Facilitation Roles	159
	Observing and Documenting Children's Play Outdoors	160
	Examining the Environment for Health and Safety Issues	162
	Children Play Spaces and Equipment for Children with Disabilities	164
	Moving Forward	165
	SUMMARY	165
	REVIEW QUESTIONS	167

MAKING CONNECTIONS	167
ADDITIONAL READING	168
WEBLINKS	168

6 Blocks and Child's Play 169

Chapter Preview	170
Defining Block Play	172
The Historical Perspective of Blocks	172
Beginning in the 1700s	172
<i>Friedrich Froebel</i>	172
Late-Nineteenth-Century Block Systems	173
<i>Richter Building Blocks</i>	173
The Twentieth Century	174
<i>Maria Montessori</i>	174
<i>Carolyn Pratt</i>	174
The Stages of Block Play	175
Types of Blocks	177
Table Blocks	177
Picture and Alphabet Blocks	178
Parquetry Blocks	178
Bristle Blocks	178
Duplo® Blocks	178
Foam Blocks	178
Floor Blocks	178
Unit Blocks	178
Hollow Blocks	179
Cardboard Bricks	180
Accessories	180
How Blocks Support Child Development	182
Blocks and Cognitive Development	183
Blocks, Language Development and Mathematics	184
Blocks and the Affective Domain	186
Block Play and Creativity	187
Physical Skills	187
Block Play and Gender	187
Blocks and Children with Disabilities	188
The Role of Early Learning Practitioners in Block Play	188
Determining One's Philosophical Perspective	188
The Early Learning Environment and Ecology	190
Organizing the Space	191
Observing Children's Block Play	193

Role Modelling	196
Starting Dialogue with Children About Block Play	197
Reflection and Development	198
SUMMARY	198
REVIEW QUESTIONS	199
MAKING CONNECTIONS	199
ADDITIONAL READING	200
WEBLINKS	200

7	Language, Emergent Literacy, and Play	201
	Chapter Preview	201
	Theoretical Frameworks	203
	From Theory to Trends	204
	Defining Language Development	206
	Defining Literacy Development	206
	Play and Language	206
	Characteristics of Language Development	208
	<i>Grammar</i>	208
	<i>Vocabulary</i>	208
	<i>Pragmatics</i>	208
	Hanan Centre Stages of Language Development	209
	Children's Conversational Roles	211
	Observing, Waiting, and Listening (The Hanan Centre	
	OWL Strategy)	212
	Language Skills and Play	213
	<i>Children, Play, and Communication Skills</i>	213
	<i>Children Learn Purposeful Verbal Interaction during Play</i>	214
	<i>Children Learn to Play with Language</i>	214
	Characteristics of Literacy Development	214
	Stages of Literacy Development	215
	The Importance of Child Participation in Emerging	
	Literacy	216
	Literacy Skills and Play	217
	Narratives or Storytelling	218
	Variations in Language and Literacy Development	219
	<i>Motivation</i>	219
	<i>Atypical Development</i>	220
	<i>Culture</i>	220
	<i>English Language Learners</i>	221

<i>Family</i>	221
<i>Other Variations</i>	221
The Roles of Early Learning Practitioners	222
Early Learning Practitioner Interactions	222
<i>The Director Role</i>	222
<i>The Entertainer Role</i>	222
<i>The Timekeeper Role</i>	223
<i>The Too-quiet Teacher Role</i>	223
<i>The Helper Role</i>	223
<i>The Cheerleader Role</i>	223
<i>The Responsive Partner Role</i>	223
<i>Interaction and Information</i>	223
The Early Learning Environment	225
Creating a Community Culture for Language and Literacy	225
<i>Observations</i>	227
<i>The Dramatic Play Centre</i>	228
<i>Writing and Book Centres</i>	228
<i>Shared Group Reading with Children</i>	229
<i>The Art Centre</i>	229
<i>Math and Science</i>	229
<i>Blocks</i>	229
<i>Outdoor Play</i>	230
<i>Music and Movement</i>	230
Setting Up a Literacy-Rich Environment	230
 SUMMARY	 231
REVIEW QUESTIONS	235
MAKING CONNECTIONS	235
ADDITIONAL READING	236
WEBLINKS	236

8 Math and Science 237

Chapter Preview	237
Theoretical Foundation	238
Defining Science and Mathematics	240
The Importance of Math and Science	242
Concept Development in Science and Mathematics	244
Science, Mathematics, and Development	244
How Do Preschoolers Learn Scientific and Mathematical Skills?	246

Playing with Science Is to Celebrate Wonder	247
The Scientific Method for Young Children	249
The Role of the Early Learning Practitioner	251
Setting Up an Environment to Support Scientific Inquiry	253
<i>Sand and Water Play</i>	254
<i>Math and Science Rocks</i>	256
The Development of Mathematical Concepts	257
<i>Counting Procedures</i>	258
<i>The Difference between Counting by Rote and</i>	
<i>Rational Counting</i>	258
Research Connections in Mathematics	259
<i>Geometry and Measurement</i>	260
<i>Pattern</i>	261
<i>Sequence</i>	262
<i>Seriation</i>	262
<i>Comparison</i>	262
<i>Classification</i>	262
The Language of Mathematics	263
A Numbers-Rich Environment	264
Observation	265
Science and Math Connections	266
<i>The Literacy Connection</i>	266
<i>The Music and Movement Connection</i>	267
<i>The Art Connection</i>	268
<i>The Cooking Connection</i>	268
 SUMMARY	 269
REVIEW QUESTIONS	271
MAKING CONNECTIONS	272
ADDITIONAL READING	273
WEBLINKS	273

9 Art and Play 274

Chapter Preview 275

Defining Art 276

Educational Approaches Influencing the Visual Arts in Early	
Childhood Programs	277
<i>John Dewey</i>	278
<i>Friedrich Froebel</i>	278

<i>The Waldorf Approach</i>	279
<i>Reggio Emilia</i>	279
Art and Child Development	281
<i>Physical Development</i>	282
<i>Cognitive Development</i>	283
<i>Social Development</i>	285
<i>Emotional Development</i>	285
Principles of Children Developing Their Visual Language through Art Experiences	287
Stages of Children's Artwork	289
Stages of Children's Drawing	289
Scribble Stage (2–4 Years of Age)	289
Pre-Schematic Stage (3–4 Years of Age)	289
Schematic Stage (5–7 Years of Age)	290
The Gang Stage: The Dawning Realism (8–10 Years of Age)	290
Stages of Clay Development	291
<i>Scribbling (3–4 Years of Age)</i>	291
<i>Pre-Schematic (4–5 Years of Age)</i>	291
<i>Schematic (5–8 Years of Age)</i>	291
<i>Dawning Realism (9–11 Years of Age)</i>	291
The Process of Art versus the Product	292
Strategies for Encouraging Creativity with Art Experiences	295
Types of Open-Ended Art Materials	296
The Role of the Early Learning Practitioners in Art Experiences	298
Children Require Early Learning Practitioners Who View Themselves as Embracing Play, Creativity, and Art	299
Children Require Early Learning Practitioners Who Have an Understanding about the Elements of the Materials	300
Children Require Early Learning Practitioners Who Know When to Be Supportive and When to Allow Children to Be Free and to Problem Solve the Area of Challenge	301
Children Require a Learning Environment with a Variety of Materials and Places to Use the Materials	301
Children Benefit from Early Learning Practitioners Who Encourage Children to Discuss Their Creations	301
Children Benefit from Early Learning Practitioners Who Observe Children and Engage in Documentation	302
Children Require Early Learning Practitioners to Have Rich Dialogue with Them about Their Art Creations	304
Children Benefit from Early Learning Practitioners Who Know about the Relationship of Art to Child Development	304
SUMMARY	305

REVIEW QUESTIONS	306
MAKING CONNECTIONS	306
ADDITIONAL READING	307
WEBLINKS	307

10 Bringing Technology into Child's Play: A New Perspective 308

Chapter Preview	309
Various Perspectives about the Use of Technology with Young Children	310
Technology and Early Learning	313
Defining Technology In a Child's World	313
Technology	313
The Benefits of Using Technology with Young Children	315
Computers and Play	317
The Stages of Using the Computer among Preschool Children	317
The Placement of Computers in Early Learning Environments	317
Technology and Child Development	320
Social and Emotional Development	320
Language Development	324
Cognitive Development	326
Physical Well-being and Motor Development	328
Technology and Equitable Issues	328
Children with Atypical Development	329
Gender Differences	330
The Role of Early Learning Practitioners in Integrating Technology into Early Learning Centres	330
Facilitating Children's Play at the Computer Centre	331
<i>Reactive Supervision</i>	331
<i>Guided Interaction</i>	331
<i>Hybrid</i>	331
Choosing Software	332
Observing Children	333
Becoming Familiar with Other Types of Technology	334
Training and Development	335
 SUMMARY	 336
REVIEW QUESTIONS	337

MAKING CONNECTIONS	337
ADDITIONAL READING	338
WEBLINKS	338

11

Music, Movement, and Play 339

Chapter Preview	340
Historical Influences of Music and Movement	341
The Importance of Music and Movement	343
Music, Movement, and Child Development	347
Psychomotor Development	348
Social and Emotional Development	349
Cognitive Development	351
Aesthetic Appreciation	353
Presenting Music and Movement to Children	353
Presenting Songs to Children	354
The Value of Music and Movement to Children with Atypical Development	355
The Role of the Early Learning Practitioner	356
Music and Movement Experience Centres	357
Musical Instruments	358
When Early Learning Practitioners Have Limited Skills in Music and Movement	358
Observations and Documentation	360
 SUMMARY	 360
REVIEW QUESTIONS	362
MAKING CONNECTIONS	362
ADDITIONAL READING	363
WEBLINKS	363

12

Planning Play Space 364

Chapter Preview	365
Children's Play	365
Sensorimotor Play	366
Symbolic Play	367
Construction Play	367

The Environmental Play Space Framework	367
Characteristics of Responsive Play Space Environments	372
Feeling Tone	372
Listen to the Children	373
A Caring Place to Play	374
Natural Light	378
Stress-Free	378
Reflects Cultural and Community Attributes	379
Places for Exploration and Freedom to Play	379
Flexible Schedules and Order	382
Individual Differences	383
Characteristics of Effective Play Space Environments	383
<i>The Physical Environment</i>	383
<i>Space</i>	384
Design Considerations for Effective Play Spaces	385
<i>Green Space</i>	386
<i>Quiet Places</i>	386
<i>Active Places</i>	386
<i>Small Group Places</i>	387
<i>Large Group Places</i>	387
<i>Flex Zones</i>	387
<i>Circulation Patterns</i>	387
<i>Spatial Partitioning</i>	387
<i>Balance</i>	388
Traditional Physical Play Space Considerations	388
How Play Spaces Affect Children's Behaviour	389
 SUMMARY	391
REVIEW QUESTIONS	392
MAKING CONNECTIONS	392
ADDITIONAL READING	393
WEBLINKS	393

13

Taking Play to the Next Level 394

Chapter Preview	396
Terminology Issues	396
Programming and Curriculum	398
Emergent Programming	399
Global Perspectives	400
Postmodernism	400
Voice	401

The Reconceptualization Movement in Canadian	
Early Learning	402
Critical Thinking	403
Values and Beliefs	403
<i>Image</i>	404
Rethinking Practice	405
Professional Dispositions	405
Reflective Practice	407
Children's Rights	407
Becoming an Advocate of Play	408
Action Research	409
Health Determinants	409
Healthy Living and Sustainability	410
Family Rights and Family Engagement	411
 SUMMARY	412
 REVIEW QUESTIONS	415
 MAKING CONNECTIONS	415
 ADDITIONAL READING	416
 WEBLINKS	416
 <i>References</i>	417
<i>Credits</i>	437
<i>Index</i>	438

Preface

Children's play—it sounds so simple, yet it is a complex process as you will come to discover as you read the information presented throughout this book. Play is as important to children as their nutrition, family nurturing, and community. Children reap so many benefits when early learning practitioners and parents invest in providing children with a rich play environment, experiences, and opportunities to explore and discover. For example, play ultimately enhances the child's sense of curiosity and wonderment, which in turn influences each aspect of the child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

Contemporary children are growing up in fast-paced societies where many adults are replacing or reducing play opportunities and options for activities that focus on academic skills, technological gadgets, organized activities such as sports, and indoor passive activities, including computer games and television. This societal shift is eroding opportunities for children to play. Early learning practitioners and educators must collectively work with children, families, neighbourhoods, policymakers, educational institutions, children's organizations, and governments to refocus our knowledge about play and, more importantly, to bring play back into the centre of a child's world. Why? Because child's play = learning for life.

Playing and Learning in Early Childhood Education evolved from a number of factors. A few years ago when working with early learning practitioners, I was intrigued and distressed to discover that some early learning practitioners did not have childhood experiences such as making mud cakes, creating snow angels or snow people, or having tea parties. Some had never built a fort out of wood pieces or blocks. A large percentage of early learning practitioners felt that outdoor play was a time for children to run off energy rather than recognizing that outdoor play can be an incubator for incredible exploration and discovery. It is common for some early learning practitioners to view outdoor play as a time for a "break." And still others believed that it was far more important to offer children "academic type" exercises than play opportunities. These perspectives led me to want to create a textbook that would provide our up-and-coming early learning practitioners with an examination of how child's play impacts every part of a child's being and development—a book that would examine both indoor and outdoor play from the perspective of risk-taking skills, problem-solving abilities, interpersonal relationships with peers and others, and how the use of natural and loose materials in play: "plant the seeds, weave the ideas [and] nurture the growth" (Dietze, 2005) of children's being.

When Dr. Diane Kashin agreed to contribute to this book, she reinforced how new research is advancing government and early learning organizations to change policies and directions across our nation. In her chapters on language and literacy experiences, math and science concepts, dramatic play, and moving play to the next level, she clearly articulates the importance of developing play spaces and experiences that offer children opportunities to learn through exploration, discovery, wonderment, making predictions, and reflecting upon their experience and

learning. Diane helps us examine the changing roles and responsibilities of early learning practitioners in facilitating learning and in becoming learning and play partners with the children, families, and communities.

Collectively, we wanted to offer early learning student practitioners and early learning practitioner graduates with a text that would highlight the theoretical concepts of play relative to each of the programming areas highlighted. We also sought to provide information that would bring insight into how theory informs the application of play experiences and how these two components support early learning practitioners in developing their philosophy and approach to working with young children.

We have been inspired by the knowledge and skills that we have gained from our early learning practitioner students, our graduates, the children, and our colleagues. This book represents a compilation of our learning acquired from our life journeys and being in the early learning field. We hope that by reading this text you too will gain new knowledge and skills to share with colleagues and our most precious resource in our communities—the children.

OUR VISION FOR THIS BOOK

As we conducted research for this book, we recognized the importance of early learning student practitioners having a text that would provide an in-depth examination of how play contributes to a child's overall development. We wanted this book to

- support early learning student practitioners in exploring the “who, what, when, how, and why” about children and play;
- spark readers to engage in discussion and debate about the concepts and ideas presented;
- highlight new research for the purpose of advancing thinking and learning about the importance of child's play to learning;
- stimulate new and experienced early learning practitioners to examine their roles and responsibilities in creating stimulating, challenging, exciting, and unique play environments and experiences with children in both indoor and outdoor environments;
- offer our readers tools to support them in educating parents about how early play experiences provide children with the foundational knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for later academic learning;
- support early learning student practitioners in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to commit to ensuring that children in both urban and rural settings have access to quality play experiences;
- provide early learning student practitioners with information about the importance of play that would be incorporated into their working philosophy;
- contribute to early learning student practitioners' developing a passion for and commitment to children and their play.

APPROACH TO THE TEXT

This text is intended to be user-friendly and a valuable resource that early learning student practitioners will use during their studies and refer back to as they enter any number of exciting career options with young children. Each chapter begins with messages from early learning practitioners to students. These messages and the application examples in each chapter are intended to help readers connect how the theoretical framework is used by early learning practitioners to inform their practice.

Learning and Playing in Early Childhood Education differs from other texts in several ways:

- First, many of the chapters discuss the concepts and programming perspectives from both an indoor and outdoor play perspective. This book not only has a chapter devoted to outdoor play, it also clearly weaves in the importance of outdoor play to the development of the whole child throughout the text.
- A second important feature of this book is the emphasis on play and learning from infancy to school age. Many of the examples are relevant to all phases of childhood.
- Third, this book introduces you to Canadian content and many Canadian educators, professionals, researchers, early learning practitioners, including Martha Friendly, Dr. Jane Hewett, and Dr. Charles Pascal, and children.
- Another key feature is the discussion on technology and children's play. It emphasizes the pros and cons about technology in early learning environments and its role in child's play.
- This book offers readers opportunities to see play from multiple perspectives. It introduces the concepts of reconceptualization and critical thinking about play.
- The final attribute of this book that differs from others is the approach taken in planning play space. The importance of creating a positive feeling tone within the early learning space and among the staff, children, parents, and community is emphasized.

We believe that this text has many unique features and would be ideal for use in both play- and curriculum-related courses. We envision this text to have many applications across ECE diploma curriculum as well as in the curriculum of related degree programs. Observation courses, methods or curriculum courses, as well as content-specific courses such as those focusing on art, planning, the environment, language and literacy, math and science, will benefit from the content presented in this text. We see the possibility of this textbook being used from one semester to the next, as we recognize that it is unlikely that in one course all of the chapter content topics could be addressed. We hope it will be a text that early learning student practitioners will refer to during their studies and as they launch their careers as early learning practitioners.

The Content and Features of the Text

We believe that learning occurs when students are engaged in exploring subjects and concepts with others in their learning community. The pedagogical layout of the text is designed to support learners in exploring the theoretical concepts through stories, examples, and discussions among faculty and other learners.

The text begins with the first three chapters introducing you to the foundational information on play. Chapter 1 examines the foundations of play. Chapter 2 discusses the process of play, while Chapter 3 highlights the importance of conducting observations and documentation of children's play.

The next section of the book, Chapters 4 through 11, highlights the relationship of play to programming areas including dramatic play, outdoor play, blocks, language and literacy, math and science, art, technology, and music. Chapter 12 outlines considerations to be made when planning play space. Chapter 13, the final chapter, examines how we can take play to the next level in our practice.

The book features

- *Opening Quotes:* Each chapter begins with a quote that is intended to offer the reader “a place to begin” in thinking about one aspect of child's play.
- *Stories from the Field:* At the beginning of each chapter, practitioners share their perspective on the topical issue the chapter will address. These messages help set the stage for you to become familiar with how theory has informed practice, how new learning is essential in the field, and how the combination of theory and practice guides early learning practitioners in their daily work with children and families.
- *Learning Outcomes:* Each chapter begins with a series of learning outcomes that will be presented in the chapter. This helps the reader to become familiar with the core concepts of each chapter.
- *Words of Wisdom Boxes:* These boxes highlight perspectives on the chapter topic from Canadian experts.
- *Stop . . . Think . . . Discuss . . . Reflect Boxes:* These boxes provide probing questions that are intended for you and members of your learning community to explore and to trigger ideas, passion, and research interests beyond the content presented in the chapter.
- *Key Terms with Definitions:* Throughout the text, key terms are shown in boldface and definitions presented in the margins.
- *Chapter Summary:* At the conclusion of each chapter, there are key points identified that summarize the core concepts of the chapter and reflect the learning outcomes presented at the onset of the chapter.
- *Review Questions:* Each chapter offers the learner questions to explore based on the content of the chapter.

- *Making Connections—Theory to Practice:* Each chapter provides scenarios based on the content of the chapter. This section is intended to help the reader make the connection between theory and practice.
- *For Further Research:* This end-of-chapter section provides suggestions for further discussion, exploration, and research. The exercises are intended to trigger debate, perspectives, and connect theory and research to practice.
- *Additional Reading and Weblinks:* The listed resources support you in exploring further information on the core content presented.

SUPPLEMENTS

Playing and Learning in Early Childhood Education is accompanied by the following supplements, which all instructors will find helpful:

An **Instructor's Manual** which offers case studies, teaching and learning methods for consideration, and other resources to support active learning with students.

A **Test Item File** (in Microsoft Word format) consisting of multiple choice, short answer/short essay, and essay questions.

PowerPoint Presentations for each chapter that help to highlight and illustrate key themes in the text.

Please note that all of these supplements are available online. They can be downloaded by instructors from a password-protected location on Pearson Canada's online catalogue (vig.pearsoned.ca). Simply search for the text, then click on "Instructor" under "Resources" in the left-hand menu. Contact your local sales representative for further information.

CourseSmart for Instructors CourseSmart goes beyond traditional expectations—providing instant, online access to the textbooks and course materials you need at a lower cost for students. And even as students save money, you can save time and hassle with a digital eTextbook that allows you to search for the most relevant content at the very moment you need it. Whether it's evaluating textbooks or creating lecture notes to help students with difficult concepts, CourseSmart can make life a little easier. See how when you visit www.coursesmart.com/instructors.

CourseSmart for Students CourseSmart goes beyond traditional expectations—providing instant, online access to the textbooks and course materials you need at an average savings of 60 percent. With instant access from any computer and the ability to search your text, you'll find the content you need quickly, no matter where you are. And with online tools like highlighting and note-taking, you can save time and study efficiently. See all the benefits at www.coursesmart.com/students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank Pearson Canada for providing us with this opportunity. We are particularly grateful to our developmental editor Rema Celio and acquisitions editor Joel Gladstone who have worked with us throughout the project. Your guidance and support have allowed this project to evolve. We thank the reviewers whose feedback helped us shape the content and the layout of the text, including the following:

Dale Long, Seneca College
 Karyn Callaghan, Mohawk College
 Cathy Coulthard, Sheridan College
 Kathrina Lalog, Seneca College
 Shivani Rikhy, Mount Royal University

We wish to sincerely thank Ingrid Timmermans for introducing us to each other. We also thank Ingrid for sharing with us her knowledge about and writing on art and young children. A major portion of Ingrid's work has influenced and is reflected in Chapter 9.

We thank Passant Elalfy for her support in assisting us with the various aspects of research required.

We would like to thank all of the children, families, and early learning centres who have allowed us to use their photos throughout the book. The photos help us emphasize key aspects of the content through the actions of the children. We would especially like to thank Diane's friend, Rosalba Bortolotti, Director of the Acorn School, for being so generous with sharing her photos and stories of children at play. We also thank Sally Kotsopoulos at Ryerson University for the various photos that she has shared with us. We are also extremely grateful to our colleagues and acquaintances who agreed to offer their words of wisdom for each of the chapters.

We would like to thank our families, extended families, and friends. A project such as this is only made possible when families and friends are encouraging, supportive, and positive. We appreciate your patience with us and your encouragement along the way. Thank you for listening to us, challenging our thoughts and perspectives, and helping us engage in and focus on making this project the best it can be.

Diane Kashin: In particular, I wish to thank my husband Lorne, my children Jeremy, Ben, and Dory for the space, support, and the inspiration to take on new challenges. Finally, thank you to my mother whose joy for life reminds me that play is a lifelong endeavour.

Beverlie Dietze: I wish to thank my brothers, sisters, aunt, and friend Sue for encouraging me to embark on new challenges and for always believing in me. Your encouragement has led me to examine, explore, and discover so many new ideas, perspectives, and opportunities. Thank you, Peter, for continuing to support me in my quest to gain new knowledge and make a difference in teaching and learning.

Without your support and encouragement these learning adventures would not occur. You are a great husband and partner in learning!

Finally, we want to acknowledge that this project brought us together as new colleagues. We are grateful to Pearson Canada for allowing us to engage in such a stimulating, collaborative learning experience. We have challenged each other, we have mentored each other, learned significantly from each other, and we have shared a collective spirit, enthusiasm, and commitment that helped us bring this project to fruition.

— Beverlie Dietze

— Diane Kashin

“ Play is by its very nature educational. And it should be pleasurable. When the fun goes out of play, most often so does the learning. ”

—J. Oppenheim (1984)

Learning Outcomes

After exploring this chapter you should be able to

- discuss five perspectives on play and describe the similarities and differences of each perspective;
- explain the relationship of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to play;
- describe how obesity, outdoor play, culture, consumerism, technology, and poverty impact the quality of play and child development;
- discuss how various theorists such as Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, have influenced early learning practitioner's knowledge and practice about play and learning; and
- describe the Canadian Association for the Education of Young Children's (CAYC) position on play for preschool and school-aged children.

1 Exploring the Foundations of Play

Stories from the Field: Practitioner to Student

When I began my college education, I thought that taking an early childhood education course would be easy—after all I had been a camp counsellor, a swimming instructor, and I was a babysitter in my neighbourhood during my teen years. I also grew up in a family with parents who believed in providing children with active learning experiences.

Prior to starting the compulsory play course, “I thought, oh this is going to be a bit boring—why do we need to study about play? Play is play—that is what children do.” I soon realized that play is a comprehensive, complicated process that children engage in. Children make play look easy and natural, but it is not. Each aspect of their play has a developmental purpose—it is laying foundation for academic, social, physical, and emotional life skills.

If I have any advice for students enrolled in Early Childhood Education programs, it is to carefully explore the concepts presented in your play course. Why? Because early learning practitioners who acquire a thorough understanding about the relationship between play and child development gain incredible skills in being able to figure out the types of experiences that would be most appropriate to help children grow and develop.

I believe that understanding the various facets of play is an important investment in your time. Every day I use my knowledge about play in my work with children. Understanding play becomes your guide, your touch point, your reference, and your anchor for programming, interacting, and respecting the important work of children—that is playing.

Melinda, ECE Graduate, 2005

CHAPTER PREVIEW

Play—what is it? Does play have a defined “textbook” meaning? Is child’s play the same across cultures, genders, and age groups? Are there different types of play? Does it differ from urban to rural environments? Do children go through stages of play? Do all children play? Does play impact us later in life?

As you can see, the word *play* brings forth many questions. It may also generate many images in your mind. For some, we may have fond memories of our childhoods—being in dress-up clothes, making mud cakes, or playing with a favourite toy. Others may think about playing outdoors with friends and the freshly cut grass clippings while others may reflect upon the neat block structure they built with others at their child care centre. For some of you reading this, you may have vague or limited memories of play and childhood. There are many reasons for this, which may include stressful childhoods, lack of opportunity for quality play experiences, or limited exposure to other children and group play. Play is an important part of childhood. As you explore the concepts of play, we hope that it will trigger positive childhood memories. Ultimately, you will begin to connect the theory of play with the play experiences that you observe children participating in.

Child’s play has long been important to early learning practitioners, parents, and professionals who have an interest in child development and human thought (Rutherford & Rogers, 2003). Throughout history, in every culture, children have played. It is a vehicle in which cultural attributes are passed from one generation to another. Through play, children communicate their feelings and ideas to other children and adults. Children gain physical development and experimentation opportunities. In essence, the subject of child’s play is complex as it formulates the foundation for child development. Understanding child’s play is pivotal to the role and responsibilities of early learning practitioners.

Observing children’s play is one of the most important roles and responsibilities of early learning practitioners. That may seem strange to you at this point in your studies, but as you engage in your studies, you will note that the young child is at the centre of early childhood programming, and it is through play that children learn and develop. Early learning practitioners examine the types of play that children participate in and use their observations to acquire information about the child so that appropriate programming may be organized that will expand play opportunities. Examining children’s play, visualizing how it may evolve, and reflecting on what has been observed and heard, sparks many questions, ideas, and pathways for the early learning practitioner and children. Play becomes part of the road map for programming. Observing children’s play is discussed in depth in Chapter 3 and is a dominant theme that is presented in each of the upcoming chapters.

This chapter will introduce you to different perspectives about what play is and its importance in the lives of young children. Learning about the complexity of play will help you in understanding how a child’s play becomes your guide for facilitating quality programming experiences—one that meets the child’s developmental needs, learning, and interests.

WORDS OF WISDOM

An Expert Describes the Importance of Play to Child Development

Jane Hewes is a Canadian expert on play. In *Let the Children Play: Nature's Answer to Early Learning* published by the Canadian Council on Learning, she makes a strong case for play because of its significant contribution to young children's development. According to Hewes, being able to play is one of the key developmental tasks of early childhood. In fact, play is the leading source of development in the early years. Essential for children's optimal development, play stimulates physical, social, and cognitive development in the early years. Children need time to play for the sake of playing.



THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD *PLAY*

Scott (2008) suggests that the origin of the word *play* is unknown. It is thought that the English adopted the word *pleien* meaning to “dance, leap for joy, and rejoice” from the Dutch in the later Middle Ages (c. fourteenth century). They translated it as *pleg(i)an*, which means “to exercise, or frolic.” Throughout history, movement and motion have been synonymous with the word *play*.

Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) indicate that “the Greek words for play and education were the same (*paitheia*); distinguished aurally by whether the accent was on the second syllable (*pie deé ah*: education) or the last syllable (*pie dee ah*: play)” (p. 3). Both words are derived from the Greek word for child, *pais*.

Defining Play

Discussions about play and learning, the definition of play, and the role of adults in children's play are essential tenets in early childhood literature. The literature clearly articulates that children in all cultures learn through play. It is through play that children acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities that become the foundation for lifelong learning and development. Play is serious business for young children (Pascal, 2009).

When we examine the literature on defining play, there is a clear distinction made between work and play. The concept of play differs from the concept of work in that play is a self-chosen activity rather than prescribed. Play is a process rather than a predicted outcome or product (Wiltz & Fein, 2006). Work has a defined intent and prescribed outcome. However, some would argue that play is a child's work.

According to Froebel (1887) children learn through play. It is serious and of significant importance to a child's development. Because play and learning are interrelated, Froebel advocated that programming for young children must be

Play is serious business for young children (Pascal, 2009).

play-focused and that children have exposure to play experiences in both indoor and outdoor environments (Dietze, 2006).

There are many perspectives on what the term *play* means. Henniger (2002) suggests that it is difficult to choose one definition that clearly defines play and its attributes. We need to think of play in broader terms—from building roadways in the sand, to building elaborate block structures, to rolling down hills or playing on a structure. Rather than provide you with one specific definition, we invite you to examine the following five perspectives and determine if there is one that resonates with you or if there are parts of each of the statements that you support.

- “The generally accepted definition of play would include three large categories: (1) sensori-motor play (large and small motor activity); (2) symbolic play, which involves representational abilities and includes the fantasy play of socio-dramatic play; and (3) construction play, which involves symbolic product formation” (Wolgang, Stannard, & Jones, 2001, p. 2).
- Play is a multidimensional, developmental (Sutton-Smith, 1997) activity expressed through a variety of forms and actions (Tannock, 2008).
- “Play is the purest, the most spiritual, product of man at this stage and is at once the prefiguration and imitation of the total human life—of the inner, secret, natural life in man and in all things. It produces, therefore, joy, freedom, satisfaction, repose within and without, and peace with the world. The springs of all good rest within it and go out from it” (Froebel, 1889, p. 25).
- “I believe that play is as fundamental a human disposition as loving and working” (Elkind, 2004, p. 36).
- For educators from Reggio Emilia of Italy, whose pre-primary schools have inspired others around the world, play is highly valued for its ability to promote development, but no more so than the complex and long-term projects in which children and teachers become engaged (New, 1998).

There is no one perspective that encapsulates the importance, the breadth, or the complexities of play. As you examine the various tenets of play, you will gain insight into why play is pivotal to childhood for learning and development. Understanding the concept of play and the influence that adults have on a child’s play is complicated. It requires early learning practitioners to examine it from a variety of perspectives. Schwartzman (1978) says that “[t]oday we are still flying theoretical ‘kites’ in the study of play—only now there are more of them. This is as it should be because play requires a multiperspective approach. . . . and resists any attempts to define it rigidly” (p. 325).

In order for an activity to be considered play, the experience must include “a measure of inner control, ability to bend or invent reality, and a strong internally based motivation for playing (Bergen, 2009; Neumann, 1971). If parents or early learning practitioners try to label experiences as play, but in reality have prescriptive requirements to the activity, this becomes work not play. For example, it is really impossible to play with flash cards whose purpose is to have a child



Photo 1.1 Children's play is stimulated by new experiences, materials, and the environment.

memorize something depicted on each card. This is not playing. Young children quickly develop the skills to be able to differentiate between pure play experiences and work being disguised as play.

As you read about play and begin to formulate the meaning of play for you in your role as an early learning practitioner, you will note that there are many national and international organizations such as the International Play Association (Canada) and the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) that advocate for society to ensure children have the right and the opportunities to play. "Promoting the Child's Right to Play' is fundamental to all aspects of child development and is a key component in preserving community and culture, in the broadest sense" (International Play Association, Canada, 2006, p. 1).

Throughout this book, the multi-facets of play will be examined. Think about the following as key reasons why early learning practitioners value play.

Play

- is a natural activity for children;
- helps children understand their social, community, and cultural world;
- supports children in understanding how to communicate and cooperate with other children. This sets the foundation for building social competence which is linked to the development of resiliency;
- impacts the child's social, moral, and emotional development, which is essential to support stress, conflict management, and resiliency;

- is a vehicle that influences the development of creativity, flexibility, and problem solving; and
- capitalizes on a child's natural curiosity and exuberance. (Pascal, 2009)

According to Pascal (2009), when play experiences are well designed, children are given the opportunities to draw upon their imagination, individual interests, their emerging capacities, and their sense of curiosity and inquiry. Young children become highly motivated in the right play environment.

Many authors begin textbooks with a discussion on play by looking at it from a historical perspective. In this book, we highlight the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child followed by some of the current societal issues that impact play, before examining some of the historical perspectives. We have taken this approach because both the international treaty and our societal issues help us formulate our views and perspectives on play and its role in early learning environments. It also stretches us to think about how children's development can positively or negatively be affected by their play environment. As you review this section, we encourage you to think about how you envision our society contributes to, or erodes, children's play.

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that outlines universally accepted rights for children. It provides countries such as Canada with a benchmark that is used to measure the treatment of children. It amalgamates a variety of agreements into one document, including the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1959.

The Convention was officially approved by the United Nations in 1989. Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on December 13, 1991. By ratifying the treaty, Canada made a commitment to comply with the articles of the Convention. This means that Canada has made a commitment to protect and enhance the basic rights of children through its policies, programs, and services. Article 31 refers to child's play. You will also note below other articles of the treaty that are interrelated to child's play.

Article 31 of the UN Convention states:

1. That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. That member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



Photo 1.2 Play is the right of every child.

Article 3 states that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 12 indicates the child has the right to express his/her views freely and have them considered.

Article 19 focuses on the prevention of child abuse and childhood injury. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that children have safe environments for their play episodes.

Article 23 tells us that children with disabilities have the right to recreation and the fullest possible social integration and individual development.

Article 29 states that education should be directed to a broad range of developmental areas, including the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities.

Article 30 states that children of ethnocultural minorities, or of indigenous origin, have the right to their own culture. This includes their forms of play/recreation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMINING SOCIETAL ISSUES AND CHILD'S PLAY

There are a number of societal issues that impact play. As identified in Figure 1.1, we highlight six societal issues that have a correlation to play and active living. Early learning practitioners and student practitioners can help bring play back into the lives of young children by making a commitment to promote play opportunities. Quality play experiences are one of the most important strategies that will contribute to children developing the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

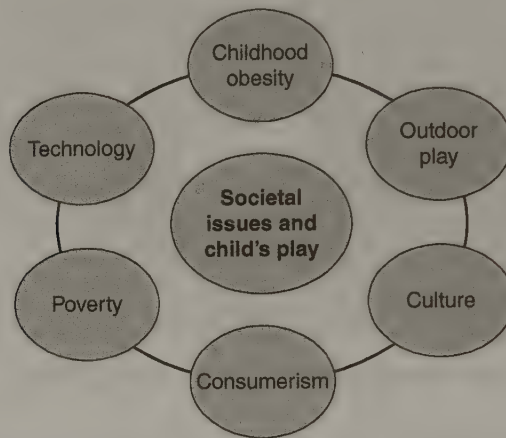


Figure 1.1 Societal Issues and Child's Play

Childhood Obesity

There are some children living in Canada who are considered overweight or obese due to defined health conditions or genetic dispositions. Others may be labelled as overweight or obese due to environmental conditions. These environmental conditions may include family role models, parenting styles, a lack of active living experiences, a lack of availability of healthy food choices, living conditions, or poverty.

Today, overweight and obesity among children is categorized as an “epidemic” in Canada. Currently, Canada ranks the fifth highest country out of 34 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for childhood obesity in the developed world. Twenty-six percent of young Canadians aged 2 to 17 years are overweight or obese. About 55 percent of our First Nations children living on reserves are either overweight or obese and 41 percent of Aboriginal children living off reserves are considered overweight or obese. In 1978, 12 percent of children aged 2 to 17 years were overweight. Three percent were obese. By 2004, 18 percent of this age group was overweight and 8 percent obese (Katzmarzyk, 2004). The obesity rates continue to increase.

The increases in overweight and obesity conditions are similar among boys and girls. The number of children between the ages of 2 and 5 years who were over-

weight or obese has remained constant from 1978 to 2004. However, during that same period, the overweight/obesity rate for children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 13 percent to 26 percent (Katzmarzyk, 2004).

In a report prepared for the House of Commons, Canada entitled *Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids*, (2007), it states that “First Nations children between the ages of 9 and 11 years are twice as likely to be overweight as their 3- to 5-year-old counterparts (29% versus 13%)” (p. 2). These findings are of major concern to First Nations community leaders, governments, policymakers and children advocates.

Obesity issues during childhood fluctuate across the Canadian landscape. For example, in the *Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids* report (2007), it states that “In 2004, the combined overweight/obesity rate of those aged 2 to 17 years was significantly above the national average (26%) in Newfoundland and Labrador (36%), New Brunswick (34%), Nova Scotia (32%) and Manitoba (31%)” (p. 2).

Children with poor diets and lack of exercise are vulnerable to an array of health problems. The health implications for children who are overweight or obese include chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart attack, joint problems, and mental health issues. For example, a 2010 study released by Statistics Canada found that just under 1 percent of Canadians aged 6 to 19 years have high blood pressure, while 2.1 percent are on the borderline of developing the condition. Janssen, a co-researcher in the study found that elevated blood pressure levels were most pronounced among the youth who were overweight or obese and high blood pressure rates were significantly higher among overweight or obese girls aged 6 to 11 years and boys aged 12 to 19 years.

Appropriate role modelling, nutrition, and active play are vital to children and their wellness. Children require appropriate play spaces, where they can run, jump, climb, and be free to explore. Children who have access to interesting tools and resources in their play space will become intrigued and want to use them in their play. The use of the tools and resources increases the potential for children to engage in more physical movement. This ideal lifestyle must be role-modelled during a child’s early years in order to establish this as a daily living practice and be continued throughout childhood.

Outdoor Play

There are many reasons cited in the literature as to why there has been a reduction in the amount of outdoor play young children participate in. Some suggest it is because of the concerns adults have for childhood safety. Others indicate it is because children will be injured or bullied while playing outdoors (Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005). Then there are those who express concern that the urban and rural play spaces are not suitable for children’s play. As outlined in the previous section, despite the concerns, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that children who are not active are at high risk of becoming overweight and develop a host of diseases that may follow them into adulthood.

As you begin to examine play, you will soon recognize that there are many benefits of outdoor play for children that can’t be emulated in indoor environments. For example, children’s power of observation of their environment is much sharper

How overweight and obesity are defined

Overweight and obesity are generally defined based on a Body Mass Index (BMI) screening tool that calculates weight and height using a standard formula. Generally the weight in kilograms is divided by the square of height in metres. Cole, Bellizzi, Flegal and Dietz (2000) identify a BMI of 25 or greater is considered overweight and a BMI of 30 or greater is identified as obesity (Canning, Courage, & Frizzell, 2004).

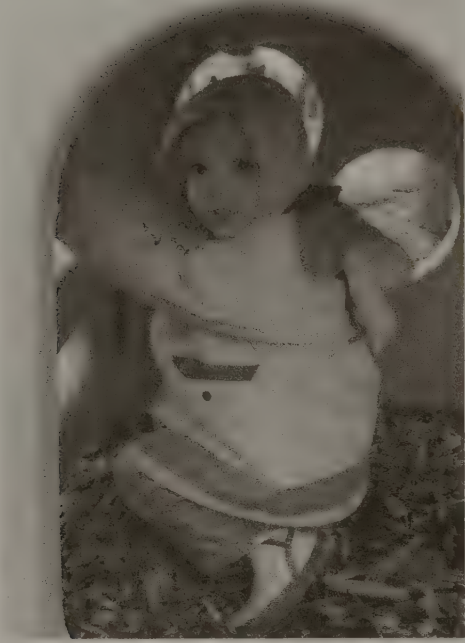


Photo 1.3 All aspects of a child's development are influenced with outdoor play.

in outdoors than in indoors (Rudolph, & Cohen, 1984). The outdoor environment has a significant impact on a child's developing motor skills and self-concept. Outdoor play stimulates social play because there is more space than indoors, the noise levels are less distracting in outdoors, and there are more active play opportunities. The outdoor play environment is where children gain overall control over their bodies—a control that is essential to their total development.

Outdoor play impacts a child's physiological and psychological development. When children play outdoors they gain exposure to light and sunshine. Children need the stimulation of the sun and light to nourish the human body (Liberman, 1991). The exposure to light decreases the heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, blood sugar, and lactic acid in the blood following active movement. The active movement increases energy, strength, endurance, tolerance to stress, and the ability of the blood to absorb and carry oxygen (Kime, 1980). These key bodily functions influence cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development.

Children who do not have sufficient outdoor play are at risk of experiencing vitamin D deficiency. This is a critical vitamin needed for the development of the healthy vertebrate skeleton during the preschool and pre-adolescent years.

Although there is sufficient evidence to support outdoor play in early learning programming, it continues to be one of the major deficiencies in program design. Organizations such as the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) and The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) maintain that since children's physical development is occurring so rapidly, children need daily, active, outdoor play experiences to use large muscle skills, to learn about their outdoor environments, and to experience freedom not always possible indoors. Hewes (2006) suggests that adults—parents and early learning practitioners—must take the same care in designing the outdoor play environment as they pay to the indoor environment because of the growing body of evidence on the developmental significance of contact with nature, light, and the quality of play experiences. You will read more about these components in Chapter 5, which is devoted specifically to outdoor play.

Outdoor play is an integral part of the early learning experiences. It requires planning for all types of weather across our Canadian landscape. The life practices established during the early years affect later life—children need to be exposed to outdoor play as part of their daily living routine.

Technology

Today's children have far less face-to-face play experiences with other children and their natural world than 20 years ago. There are many reasons for this; one of which is the exposure to technology. Children as young as 2 years of age are now exposed to technology as part of their daily living experiences. In some instances,

adults are using technology to entertain children or using it as a form of play, rather than the active play experiences that are essential for children. As you will read in Chapter 10, there is great debate about the role that technology should play in childhood. Parents, educators, and policymakers continue to examine the relationship, benefits, and dangers of mixing child's play with technology. Many advocates of play continue to express concerns that technology must not erode child's play.

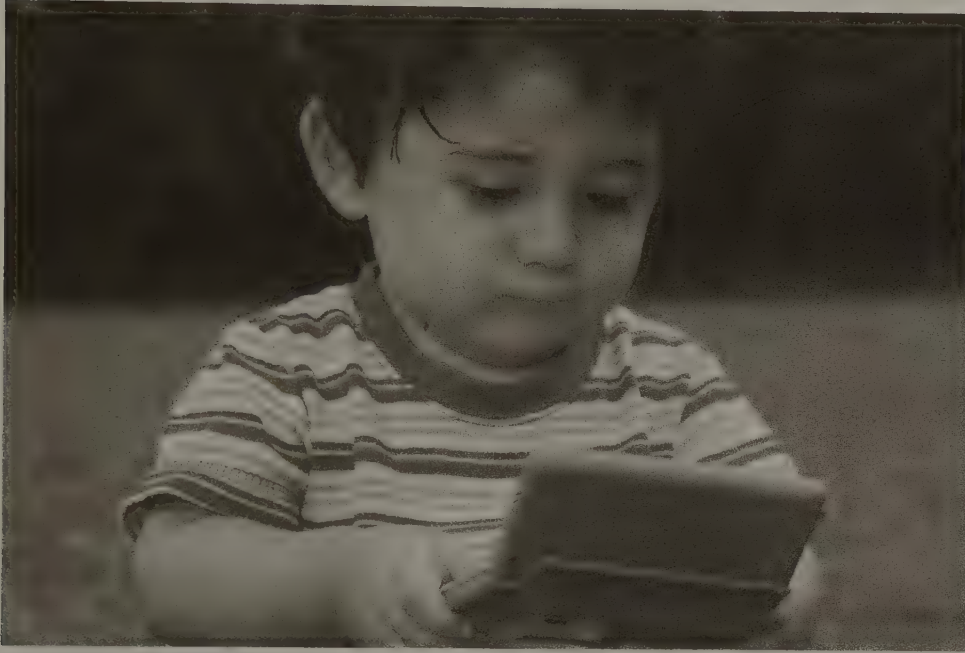


Photo 1.4 There is controversy on whether children need technology in their early years.

Culture

Canada is home to one of the world's most diverse populations and has self-identified as a multicultural society (Canadian Heritage, 2007). It is one of the few countries with a national policy that focuses on respect for diversity, multiculturalism, and anti-racism (Friendly & Prabhu, 2010).

"Culture refers to the underlying beliefs, patterns of behaviour and assumptions of a group that are passed on from one generation to the next. Culture is developed from a society's key values" (Dietze, 2006, p. 25). Early learning and child care programs in Canada service families with differing beliefs and values on a variety of subjects, including the value of child's play to development.

Around the world, play appears to be a universal activity for most children, provided that they are not being exposed to events such as famine, war, or natural disasters. The amount of time and attention invested in child's play is influenced by family, community, resources, and beliefs about the relationship of play to

development. Despite parental and societal beliefs about play, children have the innate ability to take articles such as dolls, rocks, balls, or wood and other materials within their environment and use them for play. Hughes (1999) calls play a “true cultural universal.” Play is an “enculturing” process—it is the foundation for children to learn about their culture and the diverse communities in which we live.

Each family and culture brings important values and diversity to our Canadian society. As identified by Friendly and Prabhu (2010), early childhood is the prime time for young children to learn about and develop positive thoughts, feelings, and respect for diversity. These attributes are effectively illustrated in early learning programs that philosophically incorporate social inclusion into both policy and practice.



Photo 1.5 Some families prefer their children not to play outdoors in the Canadian winter climate while others believe that it is essential for their child's development.

Early learning practitioners have a responsibility to become familiar with common practices to ensure diversity is understood and appreciated. The play space and play experiences introduce children to materials and experiences that broaden a child's knowledge about life. Families collectively are brought together in an effort to build a strong family–child–community appreciation.

Parental perspectives on play may differ from one region of the country to another or from one family to another. For example, parents who have grown up in a country such as Norway, where their culture values outdoor life and freedom to explore, will have different perspectives on outdoor play during the winter

months than parents who come from a warm climate and who have not had life experiences in the colder temperatures and weather conditions such as snow. Children coming from rural Canada and from farming communities have different play experiences from children living in an urban environment. Families who have immigrated from Middle Eastern countries to Canada may exhibit different beliefs about child-rearing, family values, and the use of natural resources such as water than European immigrants.

Below, you will find aspects of research findings that illustrate some of the potential cultural differences in relation to play. Examine each of the statements below. Then, think about how these differences may impact the play experiences in early learning centres, blended families with different cultural orientations, neighbourhoods, and your personal understanding of play and its importance for children.

- Whiting (1975) indicates that children play more when a culture supports them roaming about the community playing with whomever they choose.
- European–American mothers emphasize independence and self-expression. Parents of Chinese descent focus on social harmony and respect for rules (Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams, & Mintz, 1999). These parents require play to concentrate on proper conduct.
- Parents of Indonesian descent respond to an infant's needs until the child is mobile; then older siblings become the play partners with the child. The siblings scaffold the play, while the parents provide the guidance and direction for correct child behaviour.
- Parents of Japanese descent focus their child's play on social interactions and communications (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, Cyphers, Toda, & Ogina, 1992).
- Parents from countries with a shortage of water, such as Jordan, may not appreciate children using water as part of their daily play experiences.

Play is influenced by a child's culture and environment. When children from different cultures come to early learning places, practitioners must consider each of the cultural attributes that children bring to the environment and determine how to best support each child. For example, in 2006/2007, in Vancouver, 55 per cent of primary students did not have English as a first language (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2008). This finding would be consistent among larger cities across Canada. This means many children come to early learning programs with their **cultural norms** and language differences; some of which may be common among families or conversely very different. Early learning practitioners work with the parents and children to provide a play environment that meets the needs of all children in the early learning centre.

For those early learning practitioners who have not been exposed to cultural diversity, it is important to learn about the children's cultures. This helps you to reach beyond your sphere of knowledge and contributes to you gaining insight into the relationship of culture to play. Networking with colleagues, families, and

Cultural norms are behavioural patterns or beliefs that are common among specific groups of people. Such behaviours and beliefs are generally learned from parents, extended families, peers, and other significant people in the child's life.



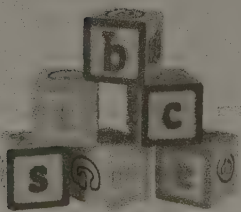
Photo 1.6 This child shares with his mother his portfolio that documents some of his play experiences. This parent takes an active role in revisiting play experiences with her son.

professionals internationally is a valuable strategy to acquire an understanding of how children's cultural backgrounds impact play and development and how the cultural attributes may be exhibited in play episodes.

Early learning practitioners benefit from observing and listening to children during play. Children's conversations with their peers during dramatic play provide early learning practitioners with valuable insight into a child's cultural, family, and community celebrations and traditions (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2004). These insights guide early learning practitioners into the types of new materials and experiences that may trigger a child's interest and expand their knowledge about play, culture, and problem solving.

Stop . . . Think . . . Discuss . . . Reflect

Think about your childhood. Can you think of experiences with children from other cultures? Did you play with children from your culture only? Were you guided in playing based on cultural norms? Were there play experiences that you engaged in that your parents indicated were not appropriate? Why or why not?



CONSUMERISM

As young children spend more time connected to technology and television, invasive marketing to children has dramatically increased. Marketing toys, food, and entertainment is commonplace. The industry magazine *KidsScreen* suggests that advertising agencies are interested in the infancy-to-three-year-old demographic because they are trying to bombard children with understanding branding at a young age. Children today often recognize brands and status items by the age of 3 or 4. Beder (1998) indicates that in one study conducted “52 percent of 3-year-olds and 73% of 4-year-olds ‘often or almost always’ ask their parents for specific brands” (p. 101). Brand loyalties and consumer habits formed during childhood will be carried through to adulthood.

Canadian consumers spend in excess of \$1.15 billion on toys annually (Canadian Toy Testing Council, 2001), while the toy manufacturers spend millions annually on toy advertising. The advertising of toys is generally the child’s first exposure to consumerism.

The Canadian Toy Testing Council indicates that one of the biggest concerns about the marketing of toy ads is the exaggeration of the product. Young children, because of their inabilities to distinguish fact from fiction, think that particular toys have the capability of doing many neat things because of the advertising they have been exposed to on television. This is of concern, because children between 2 and 5 years of age do not have the cognitive abilities to differentiate between a TV program and a commercial, or reality and fantasy.

With advertising now being expanded to include television, print, and e-mailing via the internet to children, the Canadian Paediatric Society is examining the impact of advertising on the lives of children, especially as they deal with the number of children who are overweight or obese. They suggest that most food advertising during children’s programming shows fast foods, soft drinks, candy, and pre-sweetened cereals. The commercials for healthy food make up only 4 percent of the advertising shown.

McNeal (1992) outlines the stages in the evolution of a child consumer.

- **Infancy to 2 years**—children accompany parents shopping where there are all sorts of products displayed. These children are usually placed in a shopping cart where items are placed at their eye level.
- **Age 2 to 3 years**—children accompany parents and begin requesting items. They begin to make the connections between television advertising and store items. The more the exposure to television, the more the children begin to express “wants.” During this phase, children begin to use strategies such as whining, screaming, or tears to influence parents in providing them with desired items.
- **Age 3 to 4 years**—children accompany parents and begin selecting items that they desire. At this phase, they begin to exhibit a desire for specific brands of items. Children have made many connections—they are able to express wants—to the stores where the products are available, to finding

the items in the particular stores. This is defined as the stage in which a child expresses an understanding of the want-satisfaction process in a market-driven society.

- **Age 4 to 5 years**—children accompany parents and make independent purchases. This is the phase when children choose their products and take their products to the check-out counters.

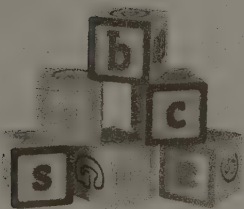
According to the Media Awareness Network (2010), the concerns about how advertising impacts children have led to some jurisdictions banning advertising to children. For example, in Québec there is a ban on all print and broadcast advertising aimed at children under thirteen. Similarly, Sweden has banned advertisements aimed at children under 12 and it is lobbying the European Union members to adopt similar policies.

Media literacy with young children refers to children being able to view the media messages as seen on television, in print, or on the internet and to be able to make meaning or connections with the message based on their life experiences.

Early learning practitioners play a role in educating children about consumerism and reducing the need for children to express the “I want . . . I need” statements. Materials available to support children’s play should be chosen for the versatility they offer children. Products that do not promote play, such as many of the electronic toys, or materials that promote sedentary action, should be replaced with more appropriate items. Early learning practitioners discuss with children, (especially school-aged children) the intent of the advertising in relation to the characteristics of particular products. Over time, with appropriate adult guidance, children can begin to develop an understanding of **media literacy**. Further information on electronic toys will be highlighted in Chapter 10.

Stop . . . Think . . . Discuss . . . Reflect

How does consumerism impact child’s play? Why? What signs might you observe in an early learning and child care centre that would lead you to be concerned about consumerism and the children? How might your consumerism impact children and families? Do consumerism and technology depend on the socioeconomic status of children and their families? Why or why not?



Poverty

Canada is ranked 20th out of 30 of the world’s wealthiest nations, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; yet, according to the 2009 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada, more than one million children living in Canada are growing up in poverty—this translates into one in nine children living in poverty. These numbers do not reflect the one in four First Nations children who now grow up in poverty. The rate of child poverty has remained at about 12 percent for the past two decades (Statistics Canada). The Report Card also indicates that while children under the age of 18 make up 22 percent of Canada’s population, they represent 37 percent of those using food banks.

Child poverty also impacts the child's levels of health and education and behavioural attributes. This is reinforced in the Determinants of Health as identified by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2010). There are 12 key determinants, which include income and social status, education and literacy, physical and social environments, gender and culture. The quality of play is influenced by these determinants. Access to play materials, peers, space, and positive role modelling are common factors that positively or negatively affect play experiences.

Poverty adds stress to families. Parental stress impacts the developing child. Families living in poverty suffer from more anxiety, depression, and irritability within the family unit (Driscoll & Nagel, 2005), which in turn impact a child's feelings of worth and the freedom needed to explore her or his environment. When parents have constant worries and stress about employment, housing, debt repayment, and needs of their children, they have less human resources and resiliency needed to nurture and support children. This in turn reduces the child's intuitive needs to express curiosity, creativity, independence, and self-control. Excessive stress, regardless of source, disrupts the neuron pathways of a child's developing brain, which can cause lifelong problems (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005). Children new to Canada and Aboriginal families are at greater risk of living in poverty (Canadian Children's Right Council, 2009).

Statistics indicate that children in low-income families suffer a higher rate of accidents during their play. One of the reasons identified is that some of the neighbourhoods where families in poverty live have more safety issues than more affluent neighbourhoods. The lack of quality play materials and equipment may also contribute to the higher level of accidents. When children do not have access to quality play experiences during the preschool years, they have reduced opportunities to develop the required physical, social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones during that expected phase of life. These milestones are essential for children to reach their full potential.

The simple story below as presented in *Toward a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians* (2006) makes linkages to health, child development, family, and play.

"Why is Jason in the hospital?

Because he has a bad infection in his leg.

But why does he have an infection?

Because he has a cut on his leg and it got infected.

But why does he have a cut on his leg?

Because he was playing in the junkyard next to his apartment building and there was some sharp, jagged steel there that he fell on.

But why was he playing in a junkyard?

Because his neighbourhood is kind of run down. A lot of kids

play there and there is no one to supervise them.

But why does he live in that neighbourhood?

Because his parents can't afford a nicer place to live.

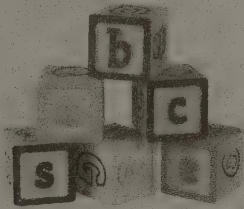
But why can't his parents afford a nicer place to live?

Because his Dad is unemployed and his Mom is sick.

But why is his Dad unemployed?

Because he doesn't have much education and he can't find a job.

But why . . . ?"



Stop . . . Think . . . Discuss . . . Reflect

Think of a 4-year-old child who lives with her mother and three siblings aged nine, three, and eighteen months respectively. They live on the tenth floor of a high-rise block in a two-bedroom apartment. How does this impact play? Is there room for the child to play? Is there room for movement? Will the child be able to keep materials in the environment so that she may return to play in an hour or the next day? If no, does that have any impact on play?

Now think of the outdoor experience. As the children go to the play area—it is the parking lot at the apartment. There is space for the child to run around, but the child is required to move each time a car comes. How does this impact play? Does the economic situation of the family influence the amount and type of play that children participate in? Why or why not?

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, early learning practitioners have benefited from the brain development research that has been conducted by researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, including neuroscience, psychology, and child development. The research has confirmed that there is a relationship between play experiences and brain development. Bergen (2009) indicates that although it is difficult to find historical evidence, there has long been speculation that the evolution of the human brain and play has occurred simultaneously. During the first 5 to 6 years of life, play development and brain development have similar complementary features.

A child's brain is rapidly developing during the early years. Brain development is complex and is influenced by both biology and environment. The genes formulate the base for the development and the environment is the critical vehicle in how the brain develops (NCAC, 2007). The growth and development of the brain are influenced by a child's experiences and environment.

Human beings become a reflection of the environment in which they develop (Perry, 2004). For example, if young children are exposed to environments that are rich

with experiences, safe, and predictable, “the child can grow to be self-regulating, thoughtful, and a productive member of family, community, and society” (Perry, 2004, p. 1). If a young child’s world lacks supportive relationships, is chaotic, bored, and lacks limited nutrition and stimulation, “the child is more likely to become impulsive, aggressive, inattentive, and have difficulties with relationships” (p. 1). This reinforces the importance of children having access to appropriate environments.

The Canadian Institute of Child Health (2008) indicates that there are four principles of brain development:

- The child’s environment shapes the brain’s wiring;
- a child experiences the outside world through the senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting—which enables the brain to create or modify connections;
- the brain operates on a ‘use it or lose it’ principle; and
- relationships with other people early in life are the major source of development of the emotional and social parts of the brain (p. 2).

Optimal brain development requires children to have positive life experiences that include good nutrition, a nourishing and stimulating environment, and quality relationships. If the child’s environment is one that encourages creativity, exploration, and wonderment, there are more opportunities for optimal brain development. To be creative, to explore, and to wonder are components best achieved through quality play experiences.

The neural systems that shape our development happen during the early years. During the first four years of a child’s life, his/her developing brain becomes organized based on the child’s life experiences and environment. Perry (2004) indicates that the neurons, neural systems, and the brain change in a “user-dependent” way. The “synaptic connections increase and strengthen through repetition, or wither through disuse” (p. 1). The brain adapts to the experiences of each child.

Play experiences support brain development. Children who participate in consistent, enriched, and stimulating play experiences are in a position where optimal development is being fostered. Examine the following play experience. Marley, Marti, and Megan decided after reading the story of Elmer to make an elephant out of boxes. They began by discussing how they could make an elephant. They asked each other what they could use. Then finding boxes, fabric pieces, and glue they began to make an elephant. They had to determine how they were going to place the boxes. They engaged in dialogue that led to verbal negotiations among the children. They determined that they did not have anything to use for a trunk and they did not know what they could use. This required them to think about elephant trunks and then explore the types of materials that could be used to achieve their desired trunk. They also returned to the storybook so that they could examine the elephant’s trunk. In consultation with their early learning practitioner, Suzanne, the children examined a variety of pieces of tubing; some of which were pliable and others rigid. They examined each to determine which would be most like an elephant’s trunk. They determined that they needed to see a live elephant

so that they could watch how the trunk moves. This required the children and the early learning practitioner to look up clips about elephants on the internet, as the children did not have access to a place where they could observe a live elephant. When children have opportunities for such play episodes, their play requires them to use their brain capacity to engage in language, problem solving, socialization skills, resource identification, and physical activity.

Recognizing that the child's brain is sculpted by her or his early experiences, which impact the development of the neural circuits known as the "synapses," the environment to which a child is exposed requires careful consideration by adults. As identified by National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) (2007), "the architecture of the brain and skills are built in a hierarchical 'bottom-up' sequence. Foundations are therefore important, as higher level circuits are built on lower level circuits" (p. 8). When children do not have opportunities to achieve a solid foundation at the lower level, it is much more challenging for them to attain the higher-order skills because the lower-level circuits are not properly structured or wired.

When you think about children achieving optimal brain development opportunities, we ask that you reflect on play and adult-child relationships. Play is meant to be interactive so that children may respond to their environment and the environment is organized so that it triggers play. Play that is child-initiated and child-directed is more likely to meet the needs of each child than adult-imposed play. Play is one of the best investments that can be made to support the child's brain development and growth potential.

Observing child's play helps early learning practitioners know the correct timing for offering new, stimulating experiences in the play environment. For example, when children stop playing with materials, use the materials in a repetitive way, or play in particular experience centres, adults take this as a cue that there is a need to examine the child's interests and add new play options that will embrace the child with new challenges and opportunities to learn through play.

In this section, we have examined the current issues that impact child's play. Understanding these issues is important because they provide you with the conceptual lenses of why play is as essential today as it was from a historical perspective. Early learning practitioners benefit from continuously examining how play is interwoven with child development. Understanding the theory and application of play is an essential skill that early learning practitioners use in their daily practice.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLASSICAL, MODERN, AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON PLAY

Students frequently ask educators why there is a need to examine the classical, modern, and contemporary perspectives on subjects such as play. Does it help early learning practitioners meet the needs of young children today? The simple answer is yes. Examining the varying beliefs about play helps students and early learning practitioners explore how the historical values, beliefs, and philosophies shape and influence our practices today. The information guides us in questioning past practice, current practice, and future practice. This contributes to building new "knowledge."