



From the Playroom

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How play serves a broader purpose for children

Just as children have settled into their daily school routines and schedules, Primary Project teams have selected students for participation in Primary Project and by now children are experiencing all that the playroom has to offer. In this edition of *From the Playroom* our focus turns to the theme of play and how play serves a broader purpose for children. One of our newly trained child associates shares some of her experiences around what it means to be a child associate. The parent piece, "Bringing the Lessons Home" focuses on becoming "media mentors" and helping to support children in finding a balance of using digital media and opportunities for good old fashioned playtime.

As the year progresses, Children's Institute will be planning a big event for Fall 2017 – Primary Project celebrates its 60th birthday! Like any big event, much time and thought will go into making the occasion a memorable one. Check out the "When it All Began" article to see what toy was introduced in 1957 along with some other fun facts from that year.



Children need the freedom and time to play.
Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity.

—KAY REDFIELD JAMISON

Sharing the Benefits of Play

By now students are underway with weekly Primary Project sessions and often times we hear from teachers and administrators, "What is it that children do during their time in Primary Project?" Our response often is "they play!" What may seem purposeless to those observing is benefitting students in and out of school for many reasons:

1. **Children learn through play.**

The child that creates a pretend grocery store or restaurant has opportunities to practice math and literacy skills through counting the number of items, or adding and subtracting while working the cash register. Similarly the child who offers to take your food order may pick up an Etch a Sketch and write out the order.



Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.

—FRED ROGERS

2. **Play is healthy.** It allows children to throw a ball, skip, jump, and climb. Physical play keeps kids healthy, promotes better sleep, and improves coordination and balance.
3. **Play relieves stress.** Play provides an outlet for children. It gives children opportunities to "just be."
4. **Play allows children to express and regulate their emotions.** Through play, children learn to cope with their emotions as they act out feelings of anger, fear, joy, frustration, and aggression. Play also helps children develop skills of empathy and understanding.
5. **Through play, children practice social skills.** Children begin to recognize and respond to other people's feelings, use their words to resolve conflict, and share and work cooperatively with others.
6. **Children learn and respond to appropriate expectations and limits.** It is through play that children learn rules and are held accountable to adhere to them by their peers.

When responding to an inquiry about what happens in the Primary Project playroom and how it helps children, be sure to leave enough time to share the benefits of play.



Reminder...

National Certification materials are due by January 31, 2017 to Arlene Bobin at abobin@childrensinstitute.net.

Unlocking the Door to a Magical World

As I open the door to the Primary Project playroom at Stuart M. Townsend Elementary, a soft smile appears on my face. I am unlocking the door to a magical world where the imagination rules and children are empowered to play with whatever inspires them. As my day starts, I begin to picture, in my mind, the children who will come to the playroom today. I see them with bright eyes as I know that they identify this as their special day, for I have come to learn that the children who have been chosen to participate look forward to their time in the playroom. To my surprise, they even remember what day of the week is *their day* to play with “Miss Margo”. It is clear that the word is out – the playroom is cool! Other children, not in the program, will come forward asking, “do you need me today?” as I see the face of the child I have come for light up with joy.



What happens in the playroom is always new, fresh, and alive, even if the children play with the same things as the week before. Perhaps we'll make a cup of tea. Maybe the paints will come off the shelf for a child yearning to unleash their creative spirit. For certain, grains of sand will be handled and sifted as someone searches for treasures, and possible chefs of the future will create culinary delights at the kitchen area. Whatever they choose to do, I sense from them, a deep comfort in their knowing that what was there before will always be available to them, whenever they are ready to explore that next toy.

When people ask me, “so what is it like to be a child associate?” my first response is “fantastic!” I enjoy creating a place where children thrive. As a child associate, I take them to a “place of their own” where they can “just be”. In the playroom there are no demands, no stress, no performance expectations, no directions, and the words “no” or “don’t” are hardly ever spoken. The playroom is a place where each child can have 30 minutes of my undivided attention. I feel that I am holding space for a universal human need that is often overlooked in our day-to-day busy culture. For me, it is an honor to do this work and not a day goes by that I am not grateful for the trust and opportunity I have been given by the Hadley-Luzerne community.

By design, the Primary Project program fosters a team effort with many opportunities for child focused collaboration. I was impressed from the very beginning while attending one of the program’s well-presented trainings. This immediately created a network of other child associates to brainstorm with and identified a rich pool of resources from Children’s Institute. The web of support grows out from there as I become one thread of support for the K-2 students of our district. Our teachers, psychologist, social worker, administration, parents, and I all weave together a beautiful tapestry with the intention of nurturing the minds, bodies, and spirits of each child. What remains constant is that we all appreciate the magic that children can experience when the door to the playroom is opened.

—Margo Nelson
Child associate, Stuart M. Townsend Elementary School,
Hadley Luzerne Central School District

1957

When it All Began

Almost 60 years ago, Primary Project began in 1957. As our attention turns to planning a celebratory event for the next school year, we're curious about what else was happening during that year. Enjoy these facts – stay tuned for our spring edition of *From the Playroom* for more updates about a 60th celebration. If you have ideas to contribute about how to celebrate this momentous occasion, we would love to hear from you!

- On January 23, 1957, machines at the Wham-O toy company rolled out the first batch of their aerodynamic plastic discs – now known to millions of fans all over the world as Frisbees.
- Other popular toys were the Slinky and Hula Hoop.
- President: Dwight D. Eisenhower
- Vice President: Richard Nixon
- Minimum wage: \$1.00
- Gallon of gas: \$0.24
- Average annual income: \$4,594.00



Bringing the Lessons Home

Setting digital media limits

Do you remember the “good old days of play?” We built tree houses and forts and spent endless hours on creative and imaginative play – sometimes with groups of siblings or friends and sometimes on our own. With changes in technology, we see radical increases in children using tablets, phones, gaming devices, and watching television. Children can spend hours in front of screens instead of enjoying play the old fashioned way.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has broadened the definition of screen time to include all digital media for entertainment purposes. The AAP recommends that children 2-5 years of age be limited to one hour per day. For children 6 years and older, parents should determine the restrictions for time spent using screens, as well as monitor the types of digital media that their children use.

The use of media is changing rapidly and there are positive aspects: It can be interactive; it can help prepare children for the “digital” world; it can be a learning tool. However there are important reasons why the AAP recommends setting limits. “Screen time” can inhibit creativity and lessen social skills, play, and other learning. Parents need to become their child’s “media mentor” to set limits and help teach them to use it as a tool to connect, create, and learn. Digital media should never replace healthy activities such as social interactions, physical play, or even sleep.

Parents are role models for children in every way. Media is no exception. Children see how adults use technology. When we use cell phones at the dinner table or in the company of friends and family, children will mimic the same behavior. We can model positive “tech time” by putting away devices or turning off televisions at meal times so that we can have face-to-face conversations. Setting “tech timers” is a concrete way to support limits. Keeping bedrooms “tech free” also helps to promote better sleep for children and adults.

For more information and to create a family media plan, visit www.healthychildren.org.

—Lynn Smith, LMSW
Social Worker, Children’s Institute



Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Cómo establecer límites para los medios digitales

¿Recuerda los “buenos tiempos antiguos de juego”? Construíamos casas y fuertes en los árboles y pasábamos incontables horas en juego creativo e imaginativo – a veces con grupos de hermanos o amigos y a veces a solas. Con los cambios en la tecnología, vemos aumentos radicales en el número de niños que usan tabletas, teléfonos, dispositivos de juego y mirando la televisión. Los niños pueden pasar horas frente a las pantallas en lugar de disfrutar del juego a la manera antigua.



La Academia Pediátrica Americana (AAP) ha ampliado la definición de tiempo de pantalla para incluir los medios digitales para propósito de entretenimiento. La AAP recomienda que los niños entre las edades de 2-5 años de edad sean limitados a una hora por día. Para niños de 6 años o mayores, los padres deben determinar las restricciones para el tiempo que pasan usando las pantallas, al igual que deben supervisar los tipos de medios digitales (de comunicación) que sus niños usan.

El uso de los medios de comunicación está cambiando rápidamente y hay aspectos positivos: Puede ser interactivo; puede preparar a los niños para el mundo “digital”; puede ser un instrumento para el aprendizaje. Sin embargo, existen razones importantes para que la AAP recomiende establecer límites. “Tiempo de pantalla” puede inhibir la creatividad y disminuir las destrezas sociales, el juego y otro aprendizaje. Los padres tienen que convertirse en “tutor de los medios de comunicación” de sus hijos para establecer los límites y ayudarles a enseñarles a usarlos como un instrumento para conectar, crear y aprender. Los medios digitales nunca deben reemplazar actividades saludables tales como las interacciones sociales, el juego físico o incluso el sueño.

Los padres son los modelos para los niños en todas las maneras. Los medios de comunicación no son una excepción. Los niños ven cómo nosotros los adultos usamos la tecnología. Cuando usamos los teléfonos celulares a la mesa de comer o en la compañía de amigos y familia, los niños imitan la misma conducta. Nosotros podemos modelar el “tiempo de tecnología” positivo si guardamos los dispositivos o apagamos la televisión a la hora de las comidas para que podamos tener conversaciones cara a cara. Establecer “temporizadores de tecnología” es una manera concreta para apoyar los límites. Mantener las habitaciones “libres de tecnología” también ayuda a promover mejor sueño para niños y adultos.

Para información adicional y para crear un plan de medios de comunicación para la familia, visite www.healthychildren.org.

—Lynn Smith, LMSW
Trabajadora Social, Children’s Institute

Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.

Training Opportunities



Children's Institute Spotlight Series presents

Trauma and Its Impact on Young Children

Thursday, January 26, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 pm at St. John Fisher College

A seminar with experts on how trauma impacts the minds and behaviors of young children. Learn about the study of child trauma in the United States and specific outcomes observed in child development when children are exposed to violence.

Featured speaker: Dr. James Lewis, an expert on trauma informed care, is a current board member who received his Psy.D. in Pediatric Clinical Neuropsychology from Central Michigan University and holds masters degrees in Psychology and Clinical Psychology from Howard University. **Panelist:** Doris A. Boyd, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, currently works at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany in their Behavioral Health Division, Child Adolescent and Family Behavioral Health Service. **Moderator:** Current board member, Dianne Cooney Miner, Ph.D., RN, CNS, Dean, Wegmans School of Nursing, St. John Fisher College.

Fee: \$10.00 – Refreshments are included in the ticket price. Professional development certificate available. RCSD/District-Approved Professional Development – See on Truenorthlogic.

Possibilities of Play Webinar

Learn how you can strengthen a child's development through play!

Wednesday, January 18, 2017 - 1:30-3:00 pm EST

Join us for a **free** webinar highlighting the importance of play in the social-emotional learning and development of children.

Audience: Early childhood providers, school-based professionals, community-based organizations

Presenter: Deborah Johnson, Ed.D.

Please register by January 16 to take advantage of this session and receive a complimentary copy of the **Possibilities of Play DVD** following the training.

The Effects of Trauma on Child Development

Far too many children have experienced trauma, including exposure to violence, abuse or neglect, loss of a loved one, fire, accidents, or other frightening experiences. The resulting traumatic stress can affect children's brains, bodies, emotions, and behavior in ways that can be challenging to understand and manage. This session will discuss how to recognize signs of trauma and how to respond sensitively to young children's needs.

January 26, 2017 - 9:00 am-12:00 pm - Contact Community Services, East Syracuse, NY

February 9, 2017 - 9:00 am-12:00 pm - Child Care Resource Network, Buffalo, NY

Trainer: Jody Todd Manly, Ph.D., Mt. Hope Family Center, University of Rochester

Fee: \$40.00. Free for RCSD Primary Project personnel

ONLINE REGISTRATION, DIRECTIONS, AND MORE INFORMATION visit www.childrensinstitute.net

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