

EPCC Newsletter



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The Importance of Play: A New Thought

BY WILMA GOLD

From an article in the New York Times, September 1, 2018 - "How to Play Our Way to a Better Democracy" we can find yet another reason to support the importance of play not only for young children but beyond. "When Alexis de Tocqueville toured America in 1831, he concluded that one secret of our success was our ability to solve problems collectively and cooperatively. He praised our mastery of the "art of association," which was crucial, he believed, for a self-governing people." (NYTimes).

The article goes on to ask, how do we teach children the art of association when adults today find it so difficult to even be in the same room with those with whom they disagree? The answer is PLAY! Simple right? As early childhood educators we have been saying and practicing this for many years. We have to resist the movement to "structure" and test our children at every turn. The Journal of American Pediatrics is the idea that the young

human brain "expects" the child to engage in thousands of hours of play, including thousands of falls, scrapes, conflicts, insults, alliances, betrayals, status competitions, and even (within limits) acts of exclusion, in order to develop its full capacities.

The article goes on to share the research of Peter Gray, a developmental psychologist at Boston College, studies the effects of "free play," which he defines as "activity that is freely chosen and directed by the participants and undertaken for its own sake, not consciously pursued to achieve ends that

are distinct from the activity itself." Free play offers children the opportunity to develop social skills, take small risks and learn to self-govern. What are the potential results of our new emphasis on "protective" and restrictive

experience? The article suggests two outcomes. First, if we "protect" kids from the small risks and harms of free play, we

One secret of our success was our ability to solve problems cooperatively.

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How can I get involved?

We are honored that you have opened and perused our quarterly newsletter.

We value your input and support for our peace education work that is so close to our hearts and minds. There are many ways that you can support our work with educators, families and communities across the country.

Here are a few ways you can get involved:

- Share your training or workshop experiences with others.
- Think about what you see on our website (educatorsforpeacefulclassroomsandcommunities.org) that you might be interested in organizing for your community or sponsoring/funding or participating in yourself
- Tell others about the training opportunities we offer
- Refer others to our website
- Grant writing support, or leads
- Offer leads for training or speaking opportunities
- Offer leads for funding sources
- Offer leads for marketing our project

Please share this newsletter and refer others to our website, educatorsforpeacefulclassroomsandcommunities.org. If you have any questions email us at bonzvo@verizon.net.

Loose Parts 3, Culturally Sustainable

BY JOYCE DANIELS



Loose Parts 3: Inspiring Culturally Sustainable Environments, Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky, Redleaf Press, 2018 continues the emphasis on natural and found materials that we see in their earlier Loose Parts books. However, in the latest book the emphasis is on “creating equitable environments that reflect the culture, history, language, and traditions of the community.”

A focus on children’s cultural education helps children of many cultures see themselves in the classroom and it also broadens the

horizons of all children as they learn about other cultures.

So if I find art materials (tiles, mosaic, fabric, shells...) for my classroom that come from a specific culture I am not only providing open-ended materials for creating something new, but I’m also introducing a material that may be new to many of the children in the classroom.

Or if I find a book about children from another culture that is unfamiliar to children and provide materials that are a part of that story, I am broadening their literacy experience. One example that is used in the book is *The Worry Stone* by Marianna Dengler, about the connections among generations in the Chumash Indian tribe. Feathers and stones added to the classroom that come from the story make those materials come to life for the children as well as invite them to create something new from these materials.

Lisa and Miriam introduce cultural materials related to music, engineering, science and math, sensory exploration, cooking, imaginative play, empathy, identity, traditions and building community, all important elements in a classroom environment. And as usual, Jenna’s photos throughout the book give clear examples and inspire creativity in the reader to stretch even further.

Peace Camp of the Foothills 2018

BY LAURA HYATT

This was the 5th year for Peace Camp of the Foothills and the 9th week-long summer camp. The theme this year was Mindfulness, a concept that the staff, leaders and campers could use in their daily lives. The hope was to provide tools and strategies for peace campers to cope with all of their big feelings and, in turn, help transform those they come into contact with.

Along with the traditional camp activities, campers and leaders sewed worry pets, complete with a miniature heart stuffed inside. The pets are designed to hold your worries, comfort you when you have worries, and even serve as a fidget tool, if needed (they were stuffed with beans).

There were two guest speakers at camp this year. Sabine Eisaian, a health coach

and educator, camp and taught the youngest campers about mindful eating. Olivia Rosewood, author of *Gratitude Soup* and a parent of one of the youth leaders, led the camp in a visualization meditation technique. The youth leaders acted out skits demonstrating how emotions can attempt to control us (similar to the concepts in the movie *Inside Out*). At camp, there were discussions about ways to manage our emotions and bring out our authentic selves. The older campers and leaders learned different strategies and techniques for approaching a conflict or supporting a situation where there are big emotions at play.

Overall, it was a peaceful, mindful week! Plans are in place for a possible Thanksgiving gratitude camp in November!



In this issue

Peace Camps, Play, and Brainstorming Techniques

- 1** BOOK REVIEW
Loose Parts 3 explores culture in a fun, hands-on way
- 2** LEVEL I TRAINING
See the results of 16 hours of learning, sharing and reflection.
- 3** AFFINITY DIAGRAMS
Learn how to brainstorm with “Dotmocracy”.
- 4** PEACE CAMPS 2018
Two Peace Camps report on the summer activities.
- 5** ALUMNI PROGRAM
Have you taken a training? Look on the next page to find out more about what is coming up next.

OUR ORGANIZATION

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stunt their ability to handle challenges and recover from failures. Second, is a reduction in conflict management and negotiation skills. Instead of learning to resolve conflicts quickly and privately, kids who learn to "tell an adult" are rewarded for making the case to authority figures that they have been mistreated.

The article concludes this way, "Democracy is hard. It demands teamwork, compromise, respect for rules and a willingness to engage with other opinionated, vociferous individuals. It also demands practice. The best place to get that practice may be out on the playground."



EPCC is now organizing an alumni community for everyone who has completed Level I and Level II.

We will be in touch at least quarterly. We will keep you informed about upcoming training events and workshops. You are invited to join us at local, state and national conferences. We will also share opportunities for you

to participate in our peace and social justice work in a variety of ways. We have established committees that you are welcome to join to further our work. We now have a workshop, writing for publication, training/presenting and an alumni activity committee. Contact Wilma at wilmagold@gmail.com or educatorspcc@gmail.com. Watch for your alumni email!

We Want to Hear from You!



Trainings and Workshops

Level II Santa Clara March 29 - 31. Sponsored by 4Cs & County Planning Council. (register and pay online, at our website!)

Look for us at the Professional Assn of Childhood Educators (PACE) Conference, in Redwood City April 27 - 28, 2019 and at the CaAEYC Conference, April 11 - 17 in Santa Clara.

Watch our web site for additional opportunities.

TRAINING REPORT

Level 1 Training at the Islamic Center in San Jose

A Level 1 Basic Training was welcomed at the Islamic Center in San Jose this past August. The preschool teachers were

very interested in exploring our concepts. We spent two lovely days sharing together!





"Dotmocracy" in action



Trainees arrange their ideas in smart groups (above) before voting using "dotmocracy" (left).

Affinity Diagrams: Process, Results, and Dots!

In the EPCC Level 2 Basic Training, we explore collaboration and decision making in a deeper way. One of the techniques we use is the Affinity Diagram Process with or Dot Voting. It is a simple group activity for recognizing preferences among limited options or making group decisions. For our purpose, also a way of organizing a brainstorm.

Basically, participants agree on the topic of discussion or brainstorm. Everyone's

voice is heard as brainstormed ideas are written on post-its, displayed on chart paper. Participants are invited to arrange the post-its according to similar ideas or ideas to work together. Post-its can be moved multiple times until the whole group agrees on a particular grouping. They can use cards to make headings of like ideas or groupings. The Dots come in as each participant is each given a set number of dot stickers to place next to options presented that they like.

The options with the most dots determine the top issues to be worked on. Next, the participants address issues or break into smaller groups and report back. They can brainstorm action steps or use dotmocracy to prioritize further. Conducting the process more than once with the options presented in a different order may bring new ideas or participants may see the resulting pattern persist.



Peace Begins with Me

2018 Peace Camp was yet another success! Having a small camp this year allowed us to give more one on one time to each of our campers. Ever since we decided on our theme, "Peace Begins with Me", our staff worked tirelessly to create a curriculum focused on that mindset. From the beginning of camp with Perspective Specs and our Community Mural, to the Persona Dolls and finally to the Learning Stories, we saw our campers eager to learn and grow as peace advocates within their own community.

Learning Stories is something new we implemented in our curriculum this year. They are a narrative typically written by an educator as they observe a child's growth over a period of time. These stories show our camper's families things that the child may say or do at camp that they wouldn't do at home. Because of this, learning stories can be an incredibly

powerful and meaningful display of a child's development away from home. Our leaders went above and beyond with their learning stories talking about our camper's strengths, ideas, and personal abilities their parents may not normally see at home.

