



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. X, No. 2

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ **Provide a safe environment**
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Provide a Safe Environment

Say Okay to Risky Play

Think back to your earliest childhood memories of playing outdoors climbing trees, swinging, making forts or playing at the beach. These fun and spontaneous outdoor activities are less common now as that involves a certain amount of risk.

According to Frances Carlson, author of *Big Body Play*, when young children have the opportunity to play in rough, active, highly physical ways, they get their heart rates up; stretch their limbs; strengthen their bones, muscles, and ligaments; burn calories and maintain a healthy weight; and learn new physical skills which contribute to their fundamental health and optimal growth.

Rough, active and physical play usually involves some sense of risk as young children navigate what their bodies are able or not able to do. Play that involves some sort of risk of injury, but is exciting and exhilarating is what we will refer to in this newsletter as "risky play." Professor Ellen Sandsetter developed "6 Categories of Risky Play" in which children seek opportunities to:

- **Play at Heights:** Climb, jump off of, hang from and balance above heights.
- **Play at Rapid Speeds:** Run, swing, slide and cycle.
- **Dangerous Tools:** Use tools that could be potentially dangerous such as scissors, rope, hammers and nails, etc.
- **Dangerous Elements:** Engage in play near water.
- **Rough and Tumble:** Play fight, wrestle, chase, sword fight with sticks or pool noodles, etc.
- **Disappearing or getting lost:** Play, hide and explore unfamiliar spaces either alone or in small groups.

This newsletter will delve into risky play – allowing you to reflect on your comfort level to encourage risky play and explore activity ideas of this type of play for all age levels.



Reflecting on Risky Play

Risky play does not mean leaving the children unattended to fend for themselves. As an adult, it will always be your duty to care for the child's wellbeing and eliminate hazards.

As Rusty Keeler points out in his book *Adventures in Risky Play*, "When we remove risk, we also hinder growth, for almost no growth comes without risk. You may be concerned about allowing the children in your care to engage in risky play for fear of injury, but affording children to take age and developmentally appropriate risks can create a safer space because the children actually learn to navigate the risks better, providing a natural barrier to potential injuries."

Each provider will have different levels of comfort regarding structure and play. Here are some things to reflect on:

- Ask yourself what you can say yes to. Think of situations such as children in the garden, touching pets, balancing on logs, etc.
- Examine your expectations and boundaries in advance and communicate these clearly with the children.
- Reflect on expectations regularly to determine if the limitations need to remain where they are or have room to be adjusted.



Risky play is different than hazardous play. Understanding the benefits of risky play and allowing children in your care to engage in and benefit from this type of play takes careful planning and intentional thought. Here are some tips to help you get started.

- Engage and educate families on the idea of risky play. Inform them through newsletters and daily conversations about what they can expect. For example, if you are going to start a mud kitchen, send out a newsletter about the benefits (e.g., to experience nature), things to expect (e.g., changes of clothes will be sent home), as well as asking them to bring activity appropriate clothing (e.g., rubber boots and old clothes that will get dirty).
- Conduct a risk benefit analysis. Observe the children and determine their need for more support or greater challenges. Ask yourself:
 - How likely is something to cause harm during the activity?
 - How severe would the harm be?
 - What are the benefits of the activity?
 - Is the child having fun? Or are they scared?
- Evaluate your space daily and eliminate any hazards that you know have a high likelihood of bodily injury.

Risky Play for All Ages

The following are some examples of how you can incorporate various opportunities for children.

- **Play at Heights**

For infants, gather all of your cushions and pillows and spread them out on the floor. Let the child climb over the pile of pillows. You can also create a path with the pillows and encourage her to climb over pillows as she moves through the room. As the child gets older, include structures to climb onto and step down from.

- **Play at Rapid Speeds**

Start with swings and slides with a support frame. For older children, make sure they have access to tricycles and small cars to ride. You can also engage in group games such as “Duck-duck-goose.”

- **Dangerous Tools**

Start with everyday objects from a variety of sources in nature and around the house for infants. Move on to objects that encourage filling, dumping, and stacking. For older children, introduce real tools under adult supervision such as child-safe scissors, as well as introduce the step-by-step process for using the tool such as buttering bread with butter knives.

- **Dangerous Elements**

Introduce water play, bubbles, and gathering of small sticks and leaves. Cooking activities are another way to expose children to heat safely.



- **Rough and Tumble**

For infants, this type of play involves initially moving the infant slowly up and down or side to side and lifting the infant into the air or gently bouncing on your knee. For preschoolers, talk to the children before play begins to ensure everyone is feeling safe and having fun. Provide a large, soft, safe surface like grass, mats or thick rugs. This play allows climbing over each other, wrestling or rolling around. Keep a close eye on the children’s facial expressions. If they are smiling and laughing, they are playing. If you see frowning, crying, fear or anger, it isn’t play.

- **Disappearing or getting lost**

For infants and toddlers, play “peek-a-boo” by using a blanket to cover the child and say “Hmm, I wonder where you are hiding?” If she can’t do it herself, you can take the blanket off and say “There you are, you were hiding, but I found you.” You can extend this activity with an older child by creating a fort by covering a table with the blanket for children to hide in.



Training Opportunity

Adventures in Risky Play: What is Your Yes? By Rusty Keeler

View this recorded webinar by Early Childhood Investigations. You will learn to breathe through risky play moments and think on your comfort level around risky play. 1.5hrs.

<https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/webinars/adventures-in-risky-play-what-is-your-yes-by-rusty-keeler/>

Kids in the Kitchen



Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with the child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Santa Hats

Adapted from weelicious.com

Ingredients

- 12 strawberries, washed
- 12 mini marshmallows
- 1 large banana
- Toothpicks

Directions*

1. Help the child use a plastic knife to cut the stem off the strawberries, creating a flat side.
2. Have the child cut the banana into 12 slices.
3. Use the toothpick to skewer through a slice of banana, then through the flat side of the strawberry.
4. Skewer the marshmallow on top of the strawberry.

Suggested Books

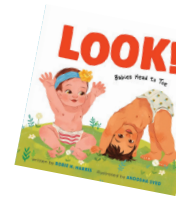
Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Infants and Toddlers

Look! Babies Head to Toe

by Robie Harris

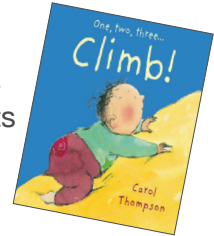
This board book is filled with pictures of babies doing all things that babies do. Introduce body parts and play!



One, Two, Three...Climb!

by Carol Thompson

Toddlers love to climb. Explore the struggles and achievements as children learn to explore using their whole bodies.



Preschoolers

The Thing Lou Couldn't Do

by Ashley Spires

This book about Lou, who has never climbed a tree. After trying to convince her friends why she can't join them, she tries it and is successful in her tree-climbing.



Let's Go to the Hardware Store

by Anne Rockwell

This book is a great introduction to real tools as Dad takes the kids to the hardware store to fix things in the house, but don't forget the picture hangers.



Citations

Carlson, F. M. (2011). *Big body play: Why boisterous, vigorous, and very physical play is essential to children's development and learning*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Keeler, R. (2020). *Adventures in risky play: What is your yes?* Exchange Press.



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