

Playing Out:
Connecting Children
with Nature
through Play



You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation

- Plato (427-347 BCE)



The Greeks

...the need for a
Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body

+ Children's play directed toward their education...

Intellectual - Practical - Moral

+ Physiological benefits of Play



Boy playing
Knucklebones
420 B.C.



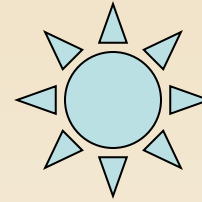
Girls
Playing
Piggyback
300 B.C.



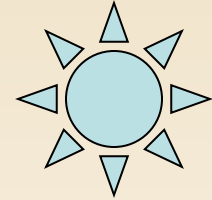
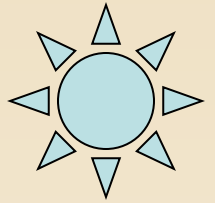
Kite flying,
young girl,
4th c. BC

17th Century

John Locke (1632 – 1704)



TOYS!!!



- ✚ Toys help children learn through play
- ✚ Found Objects from Environment
& Man Made



18th Century Rousseau (1712 – 1778)

Trial and Error

- + The importance of play, freedom and experimentation
- + Children learn from their surroundings
- + First-hand experiences



Friedrich Frobel (1782 – 1852)

- ✚ Importance of “Free Play”
- ✚ Non-Prescriptive Play Materials

Kindergarten Young Children’s Garden



Contemporary Voices

Body, Mind, Spirit

■ Brian Sutton Smith

The Ambiguity of Play

■ Bob Hughes

Play is important to our existence – it is the behavioral and psychic equivalent to Oxygen.

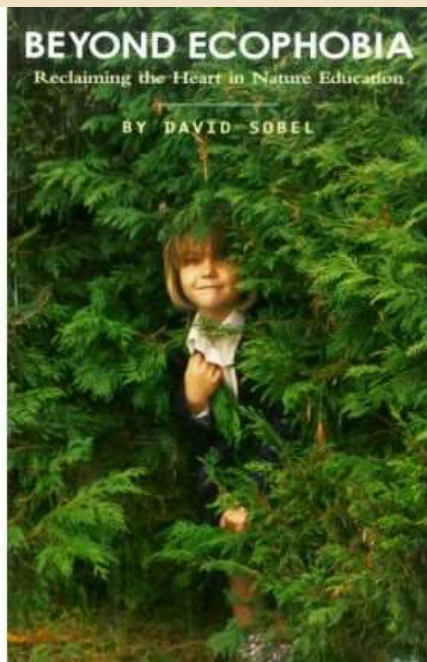
■ Stuart Brown

Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul

■ Stuart Lester and Martin Maudsley

Play Naturally



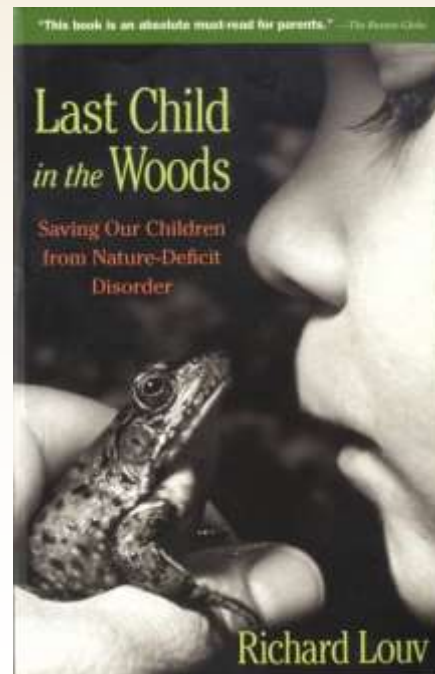


Sobel

“Give children a chance to love the earth before we ask them to save it.”



Louv: 2005

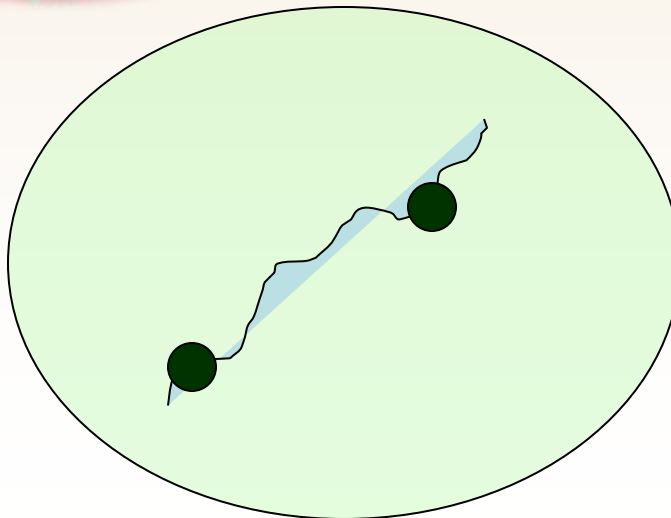
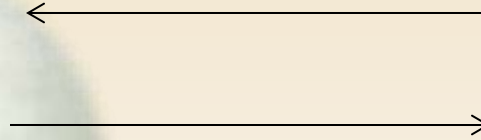


“Imagine a world in which all children grow up with a deep understanding of the life around them.”

The Nature Aspect



Being Alive



Playful Encounters
with Bodies,
Materials, Space and
Time

What is Play?

- + Freely Chosen
- + Personally Directed
- + Intrinsically Motivated

Children and young people determine and control content and intent of play



What is Play?

Play has been linked to:

- + Social Development
- + Language Learning
- + Problem Solving
- + Creativity



Animal Play



Play Across Disciplines

Psychological Approaches

- *Developmental Psychology*
- *Ecological Psychology*
- *Social Psychology*
- *Evolutionary Psychology*



Play Across Disciplines

Recognizing that play operates on a mind embodied and embedded in the world...

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The Value of Play

- ✚ Social interaction
- ✚ Physical activity
- ✚ Intellectual stimulation
- ✚ Creative achievement
- ✚ Emotional stability

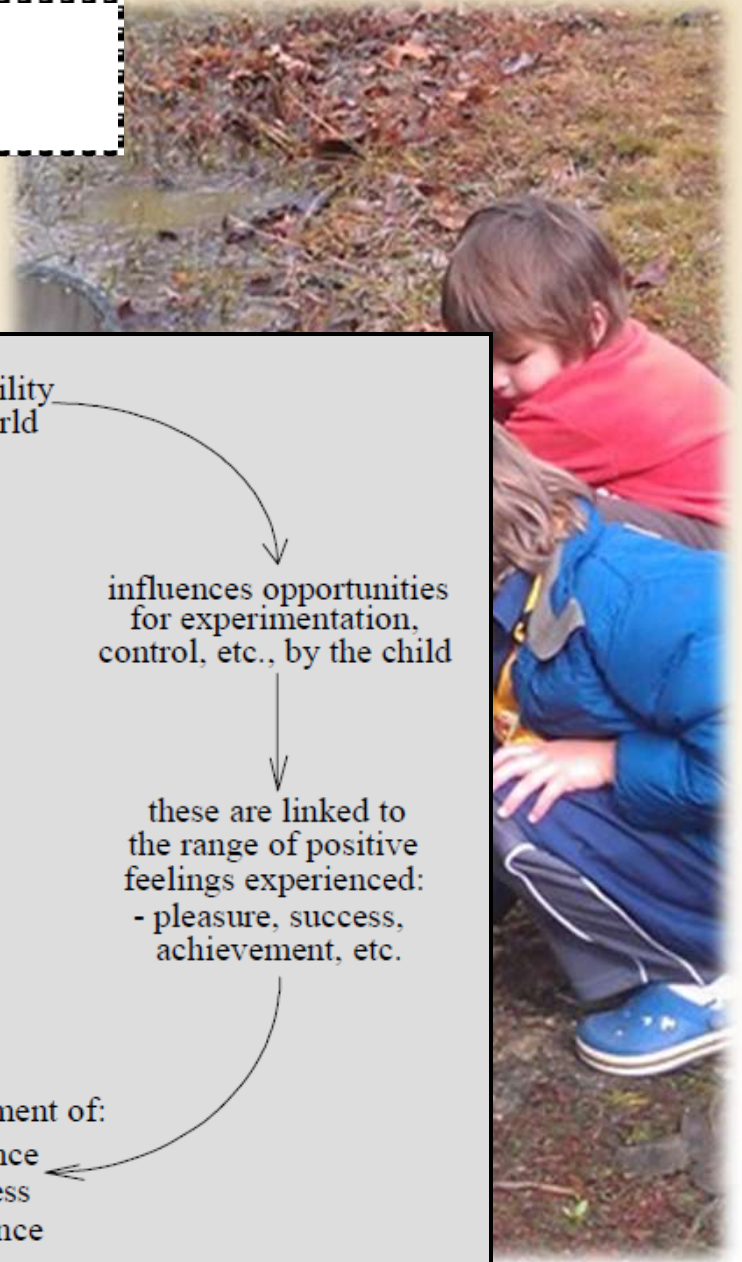
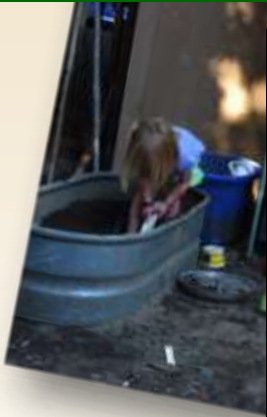
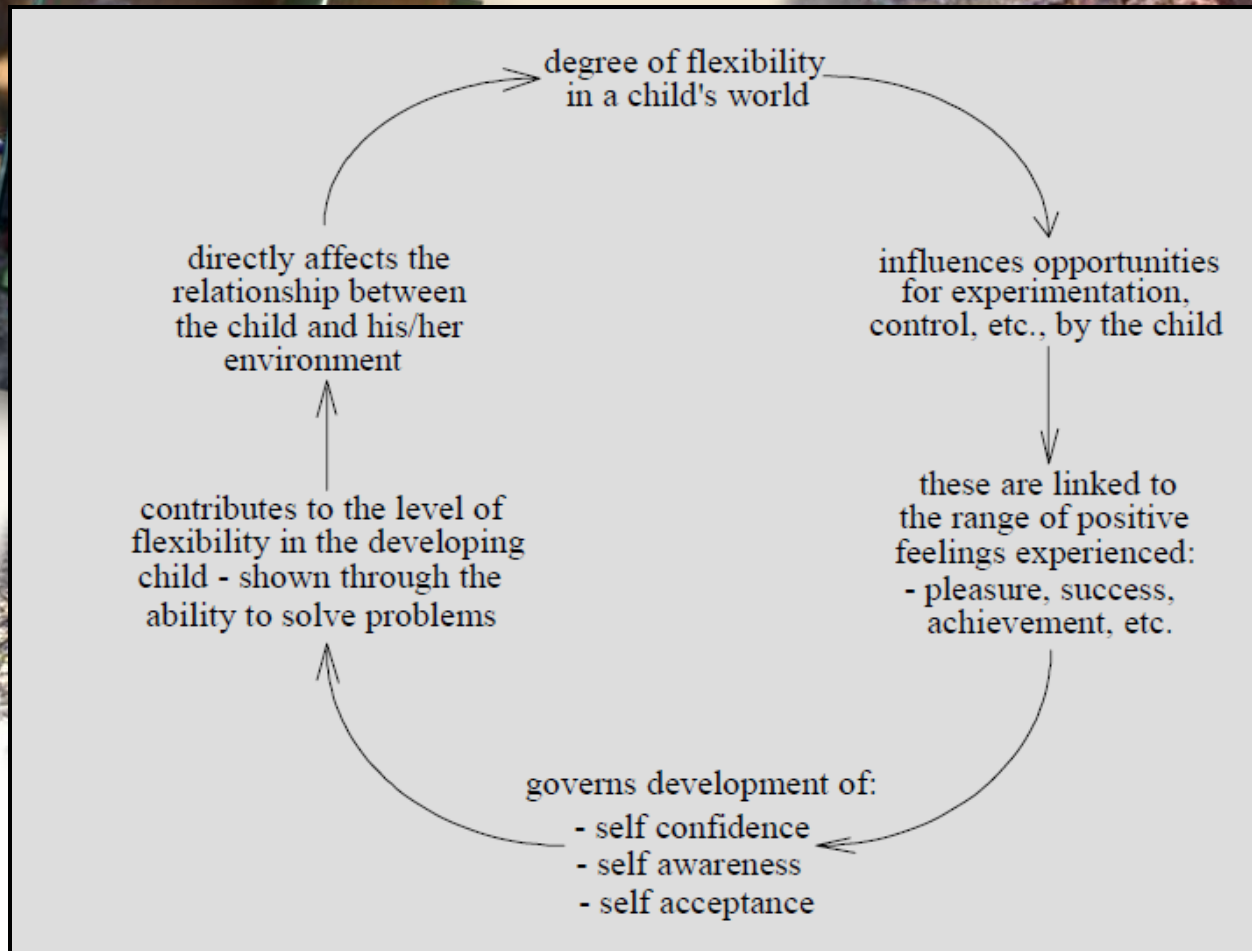


Compound Flexibility



Compound Flexibility

the ideal developmental cycle



In a Nutshell

✚ Brain, Body and Environment Interconnection

✚ Unique characteristics of Play:

Unpredictability

Novelty

Flexibility

Imagination



Through play, children have the ability to thrive and shape their world.

(Lester and Russell, 2008)

The 3 F's

+ Fun

+ Freedom

+ Flexibility



Natural Environments

Support a Wide Range Of Play:

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Natural Environments

Children can access their sense of self
and their interdependence and connectedness
to the natural world



Nature Play

Unstructured and Centered

Child

- ✚ Sense of self
- ✚ Explores
- ✚ Encourages creative thinking
- ✚ Attentive
- ✚ Experiment
- ✚ Promotes Health and Active Lifestyle
- ✚ Discovery
- ✚ Balance
- ✚ Create
- ✚ Sensory development



Why we support Play at the NC Zoo



The Conservation Connection

Goals for kidZone:

- ✚ Connect children with nature

Our Vision: Children who appreciate and enjoy nature
 ✚ Model “doable” play for individual families (accessible loose parts, simple designs)
Our Mission: To provide outdoor, affordance-rich areas for

- ✚ Provide ideas for play in nature (bagging, foraging, digging in the dirt)

- ✚ Provide opportunities for physical activity

- ✚ Build community

- ✚ Support learning processes



Playwork Principles

Play workers follow a set of Playwork Principles that establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork

These principles describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people

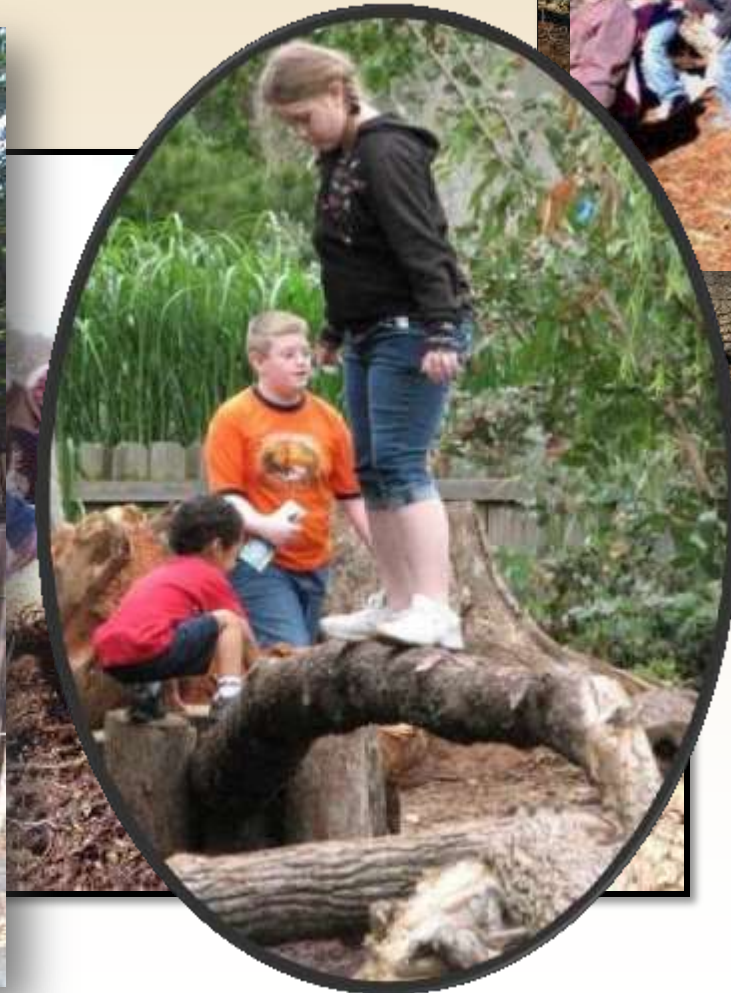


Imaginations at Play





Opportunities for Risk Taking



Gardening and Digging



Opportunities for Construction







Tools for Play



A Playful Nature: Being Open to moments of silliness and Fun!

A playful teacher creates a
'what if' environment
open to endless potential

- Power(2011)



Tools for Play

Affordance

- ✚ All action possibilities
- ✚ Large or small space
- ✚ Diverse or sterile
- ✚ Relevant to the individual



Tools for Play

Loose Parts

- ✚ Manipulatable
- ✚ Natural or manmade
- ✚ Trash or treasure



Opportunities for Risk Taking



Approaches to Intervening in Children's Play



Dynamic Risk Assessment

Planning for Play

- ✚ Allow for play
- ✚ Protect play environment
- ✚ Offer/ Vary loose parts
- ✚ Practice active awareness:
“how are they using this space?” “What can I do to enrich their experience?”
- ✚ Incorporate a balance

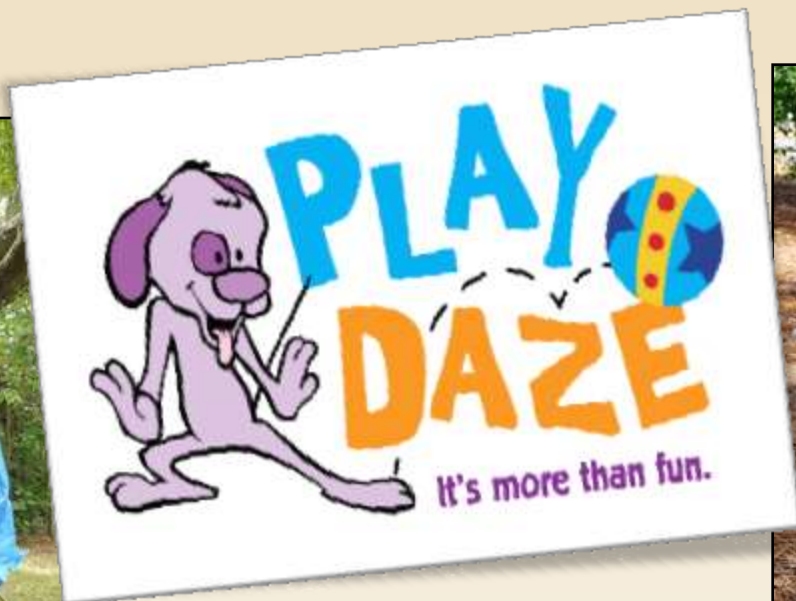


playful PEDAGOGY

inspire play. everyday.

- Community Involvement
- Training
- Research









Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul.

Friedrich Froebel, 1782-1852