SECA

DIMENSIONS of Early Childhood

Volume 45, Number 2, 2017

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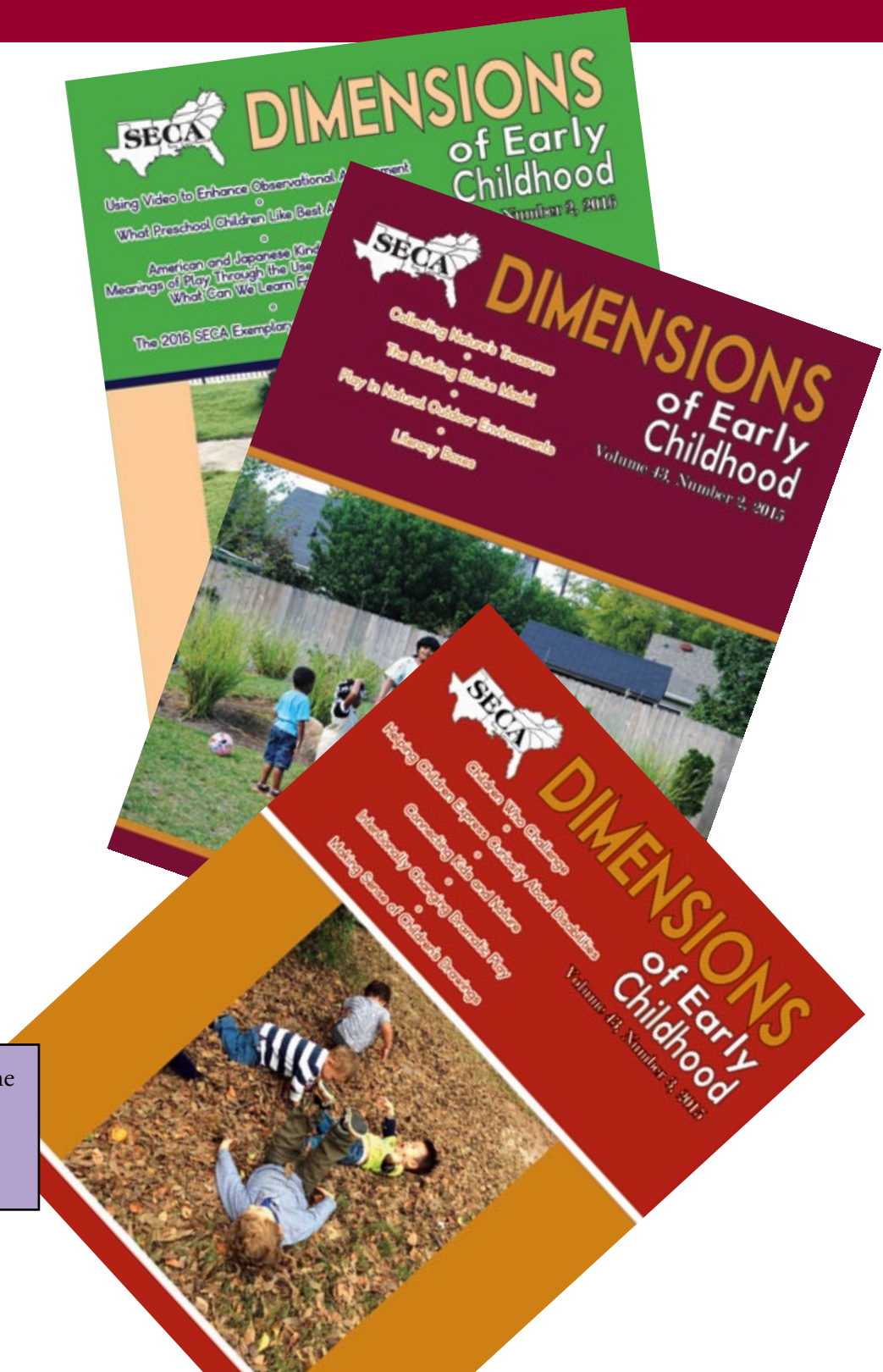

Southern Early Childhood Association

Editor - Mari Cortez, Ph.D.
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Dimensions of Early Childhood

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SECA serves the interests of early childhood educators concerned with child development, including university researchers and teacher educators; early childhood, kindergarten, and primary-grade teachers; and early childhood program administrators and proprietors. The association has affiliates in 13 Southern states. Non-affiliate memberships are available to anyone living outside the 13 affiliate states. For information about joining SECA, contact the executive offices at P.O. Box 55930, Little Rock, AR 72215-5930, (800) 305-7322. Members receive a one-year subscription to *Dimensions of Early Childhood* and discounts on SECA publications and conference registration fees.

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Refereed Articles

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President's Message

Carol Montealegre

Updates from SECA

Spring was a busy and strategic time for the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA)! Three major tasks undertaken over these past months were; finalizing revised affiliation agreements, supporting affiliate leaders as they transition from dual affiliation (SECA and NAEYC) to non-dual (SECA only) affiliation, and, undergoing the hiring process for an Executive Director! There were other tasks, too numerous to mention, each taking the time, attention, and expertise of our wonderful and dedicated SECA staff, Board and members. The culmination of activity occurred in Biloxi, MS, at SECA's annual conference! It began with the coming together of affiliate leaders at the Leadership Summit and the excitement and activity continued to resonate throughout each day of the Conference. Below are a few highlights from SECA 2017:

Our Executive Director, Glenda Bean, retiring in May, was recognized and honored for her exemplary service of 17 years at a heart-warming reception. Colleagues and friends, having had the privilege of knowing and working with Glenda, attended and celebrated her well-deserved upcoming retirement.

After undergoing a lengthy search to fill Glenda's "big shoes" as Executive Director, the position, offered to Mark Polevoy, was accepted! Mark's expertise and experience are in 'association management.' He is from Pennsylvania, but says he now looks forward to residing in Little Rock, Arkansas as he takes the helm of the SECA office. We "Welcome" Mark to this leadership role, in our special ***Southern way,*** wishing him much success!

The ***Poverty Symposium*** in Biloxi emphasized 'best practices' that have proven to be effective for young children born into, and living in, generational poverty. This devastating reality is one of the largest challenges we face in the South. In an effort to continue to address and change the course of this cruel reality, the SECA Editorial Committee is finalizing a web-based publication on the topic. Be on the lookout for this notable edition on the SECA website!

Programs that have demonstrated exemplary work in establishing *strong partnerships with families* were highlighted at our Conference in Biloxi. SECA strongly supports and promotes the well-established and accepted premise of the importance of robust 'Family-School Partnerships.' In 2016, SECA invited early childhood programs, across the South, to participate in the **2017 Family Engagement Contest**. The winners were recognized in the following categories:

Overall Winner: **Bright Beginnings** of Siloam Springs, Arkansas

Winner of the Lab School Category: **USF Preschool for Creative Learning,** University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida

Honorable Mentions: **MacFeat Early Learning Program**, Winthrop University, South Carolina

Our Little House of Learners, Little Rock, Arkansas

President's Message continued on page 45

Words from the Editor

Dr. Mari Cortez

Dear Readers:

What are the three basic considerations of developmentally appropriate practice? In this issue of *Dimensions* you are going to see that you can get new ideas regarding these considerations, which include: knowing about child development and learning, knowing what is individually appropriate, and knowing what is culturally important. As early childhood educators we must always remember these considerations in order to be intentional about learning opportunities for children.

Queridos lectores:

¿Cuáles son las tres consideraciones básicas de la práctica apropiada para el desarrollo? En este número de *Dimensions* verá que puede obtener nuevas ideas con respecto a estas consideraciones, que incluyen: conocer el desarrollo y el aprendizaje del niño, saber lo que es individualmente apropiado y saber lo que es culturalmente importante. Como educadores de la primera infancia siempre debemos recordar estas consideraciones para ser intencionales acerca de oportunidades de aprendizaje para los niños.

Best/Deseándoles lo mejor,

Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor

Opening a Window to Foster Children's Self-Confidence through Creative Art Activities

Art activities benefit young children's development in a variety of ways, including cognitive, creative, social, and emotional development. Art genres and materials present a lifelong way to relieve stress and promote self-healing, improving the quality of children's lives.

Kyoung Jin Kim,
Su-Jeong Wee,
& Beverly Boals Gilbert

In spite of the great emphasis on learning academic subjects even during the early years, the importance of art activities should not be overlooked since these kinds of activities benefit young children's development in a variety of ways, including cognitive, creative, social, and emotional development (Belz, 2011). Children can count, sort, and classify objects, identify how properties change and discover examples of cause and effect, make their own decisions, and order their behavior to accomplish a goal (Koster, 2012), which can promote cognitive development. They learn about the names of colors, different textures, and spatial relationships. Furthermore, arts become a great communicative tool for young children who often have a hard time verbalizing their ideas and feelings. Therefore, art enables children to express themselves using various media, affirming their freedom of expression (Wallace, 2015).

Art is an experience that requires discovery, exploration, experimentation, and invention, which are essential elements of creativity and imagination (Kohl, 2010). Children can explore and experiment with whatever and however they like without any restriction other than safety (Vecchi, 2010). Allowing children to experiment in new ways can greatly contribute to children's creative development while they are trying out their new ideas and allowing their imagination to freely unfold.

Sharing space and materials with others, taking turns, interacting with others, being responsible for clean up, and making positive choices in personal behavior are important aspects of social development through art. Participating in a large-group art project can enhance community feelings and promote social skills (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2012), which leads to learning the power of cooperation and of empathy (Brouillette, 2010).

Children can express their positive and negative feelings through their art making process (Dyer-Friedman & Sanders, 1997). Art fosters positive mental health by allowing a child to show individual uniqueness as well as success and accomplishment, all part of a positive self-concept (Kohl, 2010). Negative feelings and impulses can be released in positive, acceptable ways through art that involves manipulating a variety of texturized materials, such as play dough and hand-paintings. Therefore, it is critical for educators not only to provide a wide range of art genres and materials, but also to present them as a lifelong way to relieve stress and promote self-healing which will improve the quality of children's lives (Koster, 2012).

Art as a Medium to Boost Self-Confidence

Among various benefits of art for young children, this article highlights the emotional development aspect, specifically boosting self-confidence through art activities. The definition of self-confidence as having trust in one's self, clear knowledge of one's strengths and limitations and assurance of one's ability to handle a variety of situations (Kostelnik, Stein, Whiren, & Soderman, 2006) was used for purposes of this paper and research project. Self-esteem and self-confidence come from having a sense of belonging, believing that oneself is capable, and knowing that contributions are valued and worthwhile. Lack of self-esteem has been shown to lead to a multitude

of physical, mental, and emotional problems (Kernis, 2005), eventually resulting in overall academic and social underperformance as well as behavior problems. Thus, it is vital for early childhood educators to provide an environment in which children are nurtured in a positive sense of self (Mayesky, 2003).

Young children feel a sense of emotional satisfaction when they are involved in making art, and this satisfaction comes from the control children have over the materials they use and the autonomy they have in their decision-making process. Making art also builds children's self-esteem by giving them opportunities to express what they are thinking and feeling (Fox & Berry, 2013). Children easily feel that they can do well in art and accordingly, they grow in self-confidence and self-acceptance (Mayesky, 2003).

Creative hands-on activities are believed to be effective interventions for preschool children who struggle with social and emotional competences because art activities do not rely on verbal processing (Klorer & Robb, 2012). Therefore, this article reiterates the importance of creative and open-ended art activities to promote young children's emotional development, especially focusing on building self-confidence. The following case study illustrates how a 10-week art intervention program helped to increase children's self-confidence. It also highlights the teachers' roles in working with children and creating an environment for boosting children's self-confidence.

Art Intervention Program

Specifically designed for boosting children's self-confidence, the art intervention program consisted of an extended time period in which a variety of art materials were made available weekly for children's exploration and creative energy. The focus of this program was to assess children's confidence levels during and after their art making. These children were in an early intervention program in which specific therapies were provided such as speech, occupational, developmental, and physical therapies. Although the children had a regular art activity time during the day, they were usually exposed to art consisting primarily of predetermined colors and cut-and-paste activity sheets. As the curricular focus, most of the activities the children experienced previously were crafts, defined as the use of art materials for a pre-determined individual outcome. In this school environment where adult-led, dictated art was the focus, a change was made to promote children's creation of art on their own.

Art enables children to express themselves.

Mrs. Renee was a licensed and state-certified early interventionist teacher holding a degree in Special Education. Her preschool classroom, housed in a public elementary school, served nine children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years. These children, diagnosed with a range of multiple developmental needs and levels, participated in a weekly one-hour art intervention session over a period of 10 weeks. Mrs. Renee explained that art is anything children could draw, paint, make or create to show or express their feelings, ideas, or experiences. She reminded the children that they could create any type of art that would make them feel good using any combinations of the materials within the art center.

To boost self-confidence and to support the creative process, specific types of behaviors, actions, and communications were used with the children. The underlying philosophical belief that art is unique and an expression original to each individual provided the foundation for the experiences. Mrs. Renee not only provided a wide variety of interesting and open-ended materials, but also she asked open-ended questions to expand children's ideas and help a problem-solving process.

Mrs. Renee frequently commented on the process of children's art making, elements of art (e.g., colors, lines, and textures), the shades selected, or the placement of the marks found in children's artworks. For example, upon observing a child's work, Mrs. Renee's feedback included comments such as, "I can see you used a purple crayon to make marks on your page and to write your name. Tell me about the color purple and the marks on the page." We know that often, children of this age and developmental level, pick up any crayon or marker in close proximity with little thought of schema, plan, or purpose for a piece of art. However, Mrs. Renee's comments, although not directly telling the child to select colors for a purpose, may cause the child to begin to consider why certain colors might be chosen.

The environment of acceptance was necessary for growth in self-confidence and in the use of a variety of types of media for self-expression. Mrs. Renee was setting the tone and

creating the environment to support autonomy and thought in creative expression. Mrs. Renee would not direct children to use more than one color in an art opportunity, but the words selected and tone of acceptance throughout the 10-week period provided the climate needed for children to more boldly and with thought and consideration, create works of art. The thought process is always more important than the finished product. The acceptance of the child's work regardless of how or what it might appear to look like was essential to the classroom environment in this school.

With words of encouragement, Mrs. Renee supported children emotionally and modeled behavior and language to demonstrate respect of others' art works. Table 1 summarizes the instruction, activities, and materials provided during each session.

Mrs. Renee asked children to draw their self-portraits twice, during the first and the last (10th) weeks of the program. Mrs. Renee observed the children and documented their confidence levels based on three criteria, trust in themselves, identifying their strengths and limitations, and assurance of their abilities (Kostelnik et al., 2006), a total of 5 times (weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). Then, children's confidence level data were put into a chart, displaying confidence levels 1-3 (1=low, 2=middle, 3=high).

Overall Result about Confidence Levels and Changes in Self-portrait

Although two out of nine children showed a high level of confidence from the start of the program, overall children's confidence levels gradually rose during the 10-week period of the art intervention (see *Figure 1*).

***Table 1*: Description of Instructions, Activities, and Materials provided during Art Intervention Program**

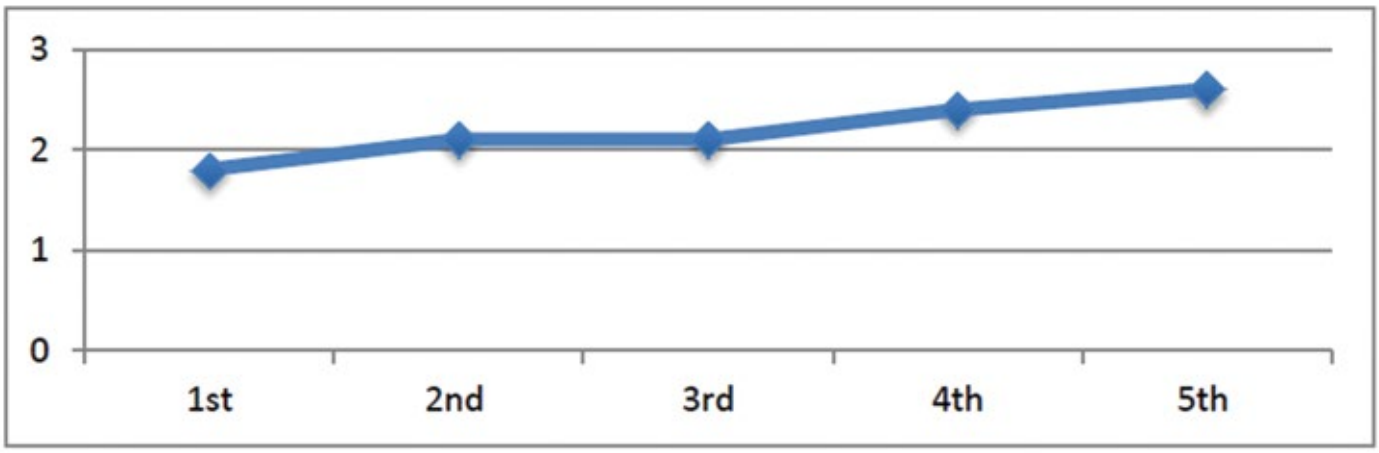
Week	Description of instructions, activities, and materials
1	• Explaining what art is. • Drawing self-portrait: Children were handed a piece of paper with a circle in the middle and they were be asked to draw a picture of themselves.
2-3	• Free drawing: encouraging the children to draw whatever they wanted to draw with crayons, color pencils, markers, and paints. • Providing encouragement and recognition of efforts during the activity.
4-5	• Free creative art activity with various shapes, colors, textures of paper, scissors, glues, glitters, and stickers along with drawing utensils. • Encouragement and positive reinforcement were given throughout the process. • Children were encouraged to be creative.
6-7	• Free creative art activity with colored construction paper, drawing utensils, glue, and scissors. • Children were encouraged to be creative and recognized for their efforts.
8-9	• Free creative art activity with colored construction paper, collage materials, drawing utensils, decorating materials, and divergent consumables. • Encouragement and support were provided throughout the process.
10	• Drawing self-portrait: Specific instruction was the same as the first week's self-portrait. • Display of children's finished art projects and a storytelling session about the children's art pieces and recognition given for each child's efforts and work.

The average of the confidence level at week 1 was 1.8, while that at week 10 was 2.7.

An analysis of the artwork showed that all children gained varying levels of confidence from the beginning to the end of the 10-week period, based on the definition provided and the criteria stated. Several primary factors likely contributed to this success, namely: familiarity, repeated and frequent use of art materials in a free-form manner, and teacher support in the form of positive encouragement and reinforcement. Additionally, increased development of fine motor skills over the ten-week period as well as increased language and cognitive development impacted children's abilities and products. Moreover, the children used more of the diverse materials provided as time progressed.

When comparing self-portraits, as the program progressed, the children used more colors and added more details, added positive facial expressions including various kinds of clothing and parts of the face and body, which demonstrated a more

Figure 1. Overall children's confidence levels



complete expression of their own understandings of the human body and self. Clearer lines and colorings were easily noticeable toward the end of the program. Based on Lowenfeld's stages of young children's artistic development (Isbell & Raines, 2013), preschoolers are usually at a basic form stage where children's drawings begin to exhibit some type of organization. This is also identified as a pre-schematic stage where children begin to use symbols or combine basic symbols, prior to a holistic purpose or thematic development of a drawing or piece of art.

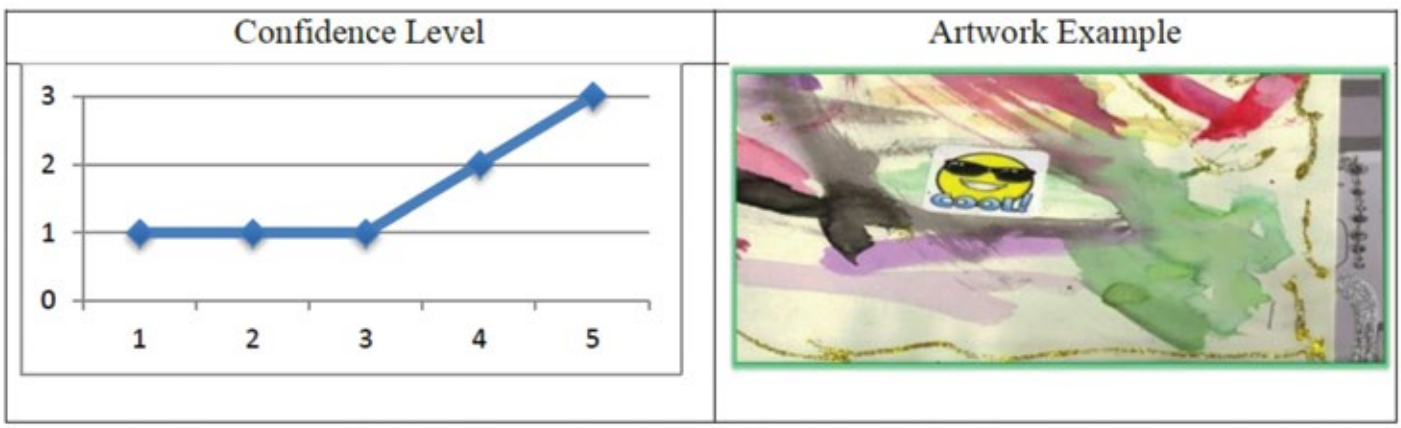
Selected Children's Examples

This section shows how the four selected children experienced changes in their confidence levels as demonstrated in their self-portraits, as well as the methods used by the teacher to boost children's confidence.

Chandler's Example

Figure 2 shows how Chandler's confidence level changed over time along with his artwork. First, Chandler's confidence level stayed the same during the first two measures (low), and then continued to rise after the third time when his confidence level was measured. During the first three weeks, Chandler had a hard time engaging in art activities: he stopped his activities and looked at others' works or walked around the classroom. He finished his art projects quickly: within 5 minutes he had drawn a few straight and curved lines using no more than 3 colors. Mrs. Renee offered him materials in which he might be interested (e.g., car-shaped paper pieces and blue colored marker) and gave specific and encouraging comments on his works (e.g., "Look how hard you are working at drawing a circle." and "You made big blue marks on your paper."). From the time of the third assessment measure, Chandler gradually showed interest and effort in his art works. He was observed spending more time working on his art projects, using various materials and colors provided, using space effectively, and adding more detail. While covering the majority of the paper with colors, there was an attention to the boundaries of the paper. During the last week, he spent a whole hour intermittently working on and adding more to his paintings

Figure 2. Chandler's confidence level and artwork example



showing strong confidence levels in all areas in the final measure.

Figure 3 shows Chandler's self-portraits. The left one, which was drawn during the first week, demonstrates that Chandler has only colored the pre-drawn shape. On the right, drawn in the 10th week, he showed growth in the understanding that one color does not create a full piece of artwork: he colored in layers and he understood that the areas of his "face" needed to be differentiated and that he had gained confidence in using a variety of art materials in his creation.

Ariel's Example

Ariel's confidence level (see *Figure 4*) rose after the first two weeks and stayed consistently strong until the end. During the first measure, Ariel was observed to wait until others had finished. She slowly started her own art project, which caused her to have insufficient time to finish and possibly prevented her from expressing creative ideas. Mrs. Renee reassured her that all children had unique ideas and provided extra help by talking with Ariel about what she would like to do with the materials. Following the second assessment measure, Ariel did not wait until others had finished but initiated her project showing that she had enough confidence in herself to begin without being overly conscious of others. She was able to show her own thinking in her drawings. During the final measure, Ariel said that she loved what she created and enjoyed talking about what she made and how she had made it, revealing strong confidence.

Her artwork example (see *Figure 4*) shows a great deal of attention to the boundaries of the paper. She literally outlined her work surface with varied colors. She had decided her name is of central importance to her work. Her use of cloud like shapes at the top shows two possibilities: she understands the placement of clouds at the top of her world and she understands how to make the cloud shape. The clouds are also evidence of a skyline in her work and she has used the bottom of the paper effectively to demonstrate a base line.

In analyzing Ariel's self-portraits (*Figure 5*), the first of the two self portraits is already at a high cognitve and artistic interpretive level. The features of the face were detailed, including eyelashes, nostrils, and teeth. Her second self portrait also contained details, but the details extended further (i.e., the body was not a stick figure, the body had clothing colored in two colors, the hand appeared to be holding an object). Her confidence in drawing

Figure 3. Chandler's self-portraits

Figure 4. Ariel's confidence level and artwork example

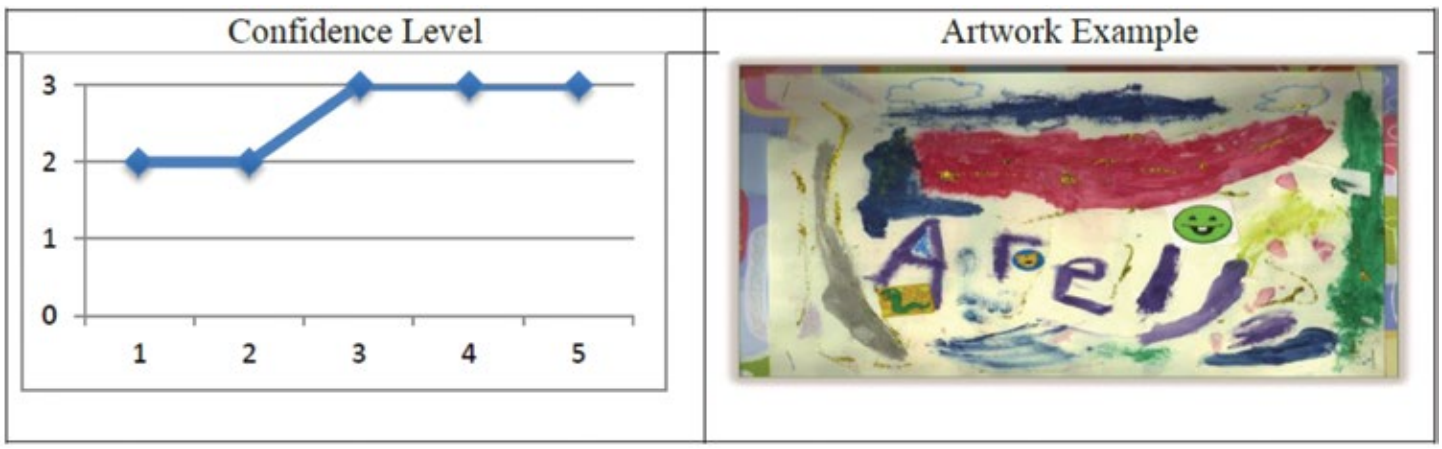


Figure 5. Ariel's self-portraits

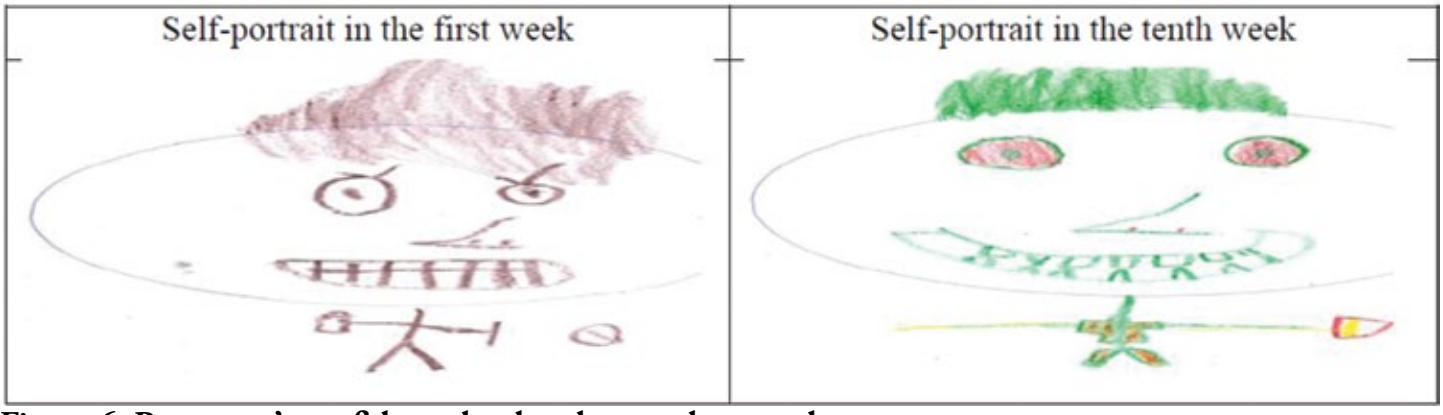
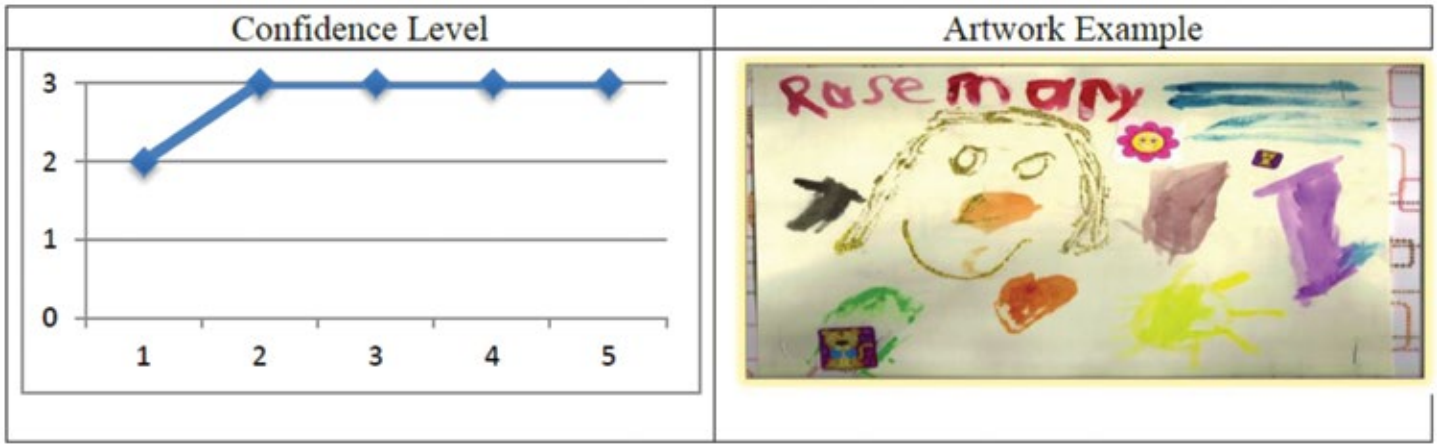


Figure 6. Rosemary's confidence level and artwork example



has clearly increased as evidenced by adding details she deemed important to the picture of herself as a fully functioning person.

Rosemary's Example

After the first assessment measure, Rosemary's confidence level remained consistently high till the last measure as shown in *Figure 6*. At first, Rosemary asked Mrs. Renee to draw for her, saying she did not know what to do and she could not draw well. Mrs. Renee encouraged Rosemary to describe what she would like to draw and how it looked through guided questions. At times, the teacher offered illustrations from picture books or photographs of the objects that Rosemary liked to draw, which helped her visualize and guided her drawing. Her artwork was full of color and shape with a clear representation of a person. Strong confidence showed in her use of space, color, and representation.

In the left portrait in *Figure 7*, Rosemary had details in her face such as pupils in the eyes, and clearly distinct and colored hair. However, she was more representational with the body, which showed her growth in cognition and confidence to expand her art. In addition, her self-portrait in the last week was anchored on a base line showing an example where the reliance on the premade circle seems to distract from the quality of the experience when compared to the totally self-created piece of work previously shown.

Mikey's Example

Mikey maintained his confidence level at medium until the third assessment measure and then showed increased confidence during the last two measures (see *Figure 8*). During the first two measures, he looked relaxed yet focused. During the third measure, he was more into the creation process but did not appear satisfied with his product and did not share what he created. Mrs. Renee pointed out positive qualities in his creation process and projects and gave detailed comments on artistic properties, including shapes, colors, and spatial use. From the fourth through the final measures, he commented on his own work positively and shared what he made with excitement and confidence. Mikey has used colors and movements in the example of the artwork. The movement of his hand is clearly respecting the boundaries of the materials. The change in color on the same line showed his freedom in using various colors.

On the left self- portrait in *Figure 9*, the large smile, the details of the face, and the full use of the

oval showed his confidence in using materials and space. On the right self-portrait, smile and features still existed but the features were drawn larger and more confidently. However, the colors delineated the features from the skin, which shows advancing cognition.

Toward Boosting Children's Self-Confidence through Creative Art Activities

This case study of the art intervention program for preschoolers showed children's noticeably increasing self-confidence through creative art activities and the teacher's appropriate guidance and encouragement. Based on the findings of the case study, we recommend that teachers use the following suggestions.

First, social-emotional skills flourish in an environment where children feel self-confident, relaxed, and secure. Thus, it is essential for teachers to provide a safe and positive social climate environment where

Figure 7. Rosemary's self-portraits

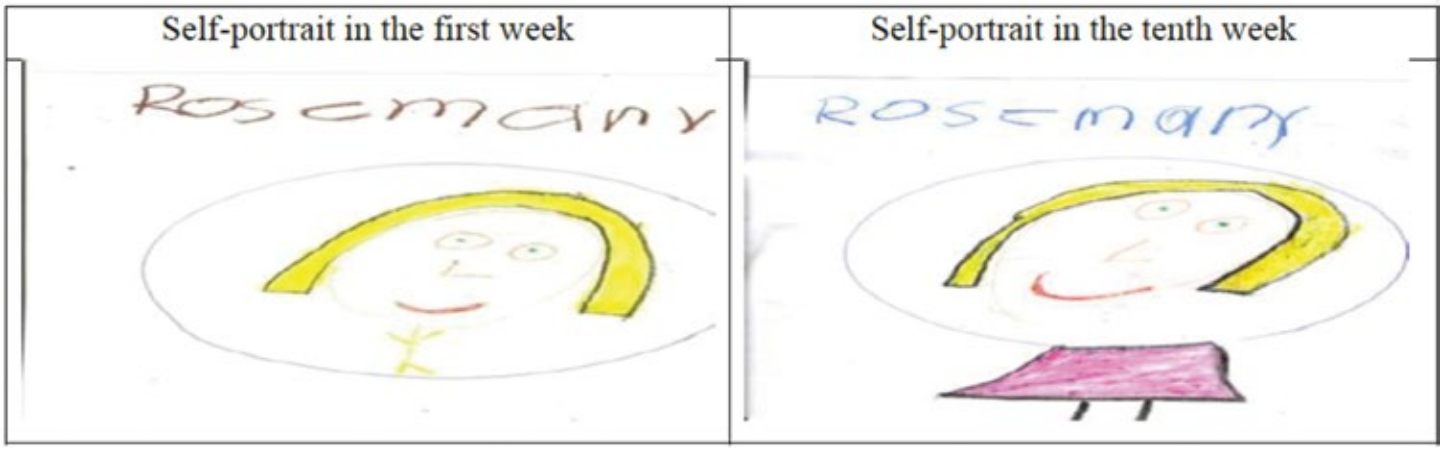


Figure 8. Mikey's confidence level and artwork example

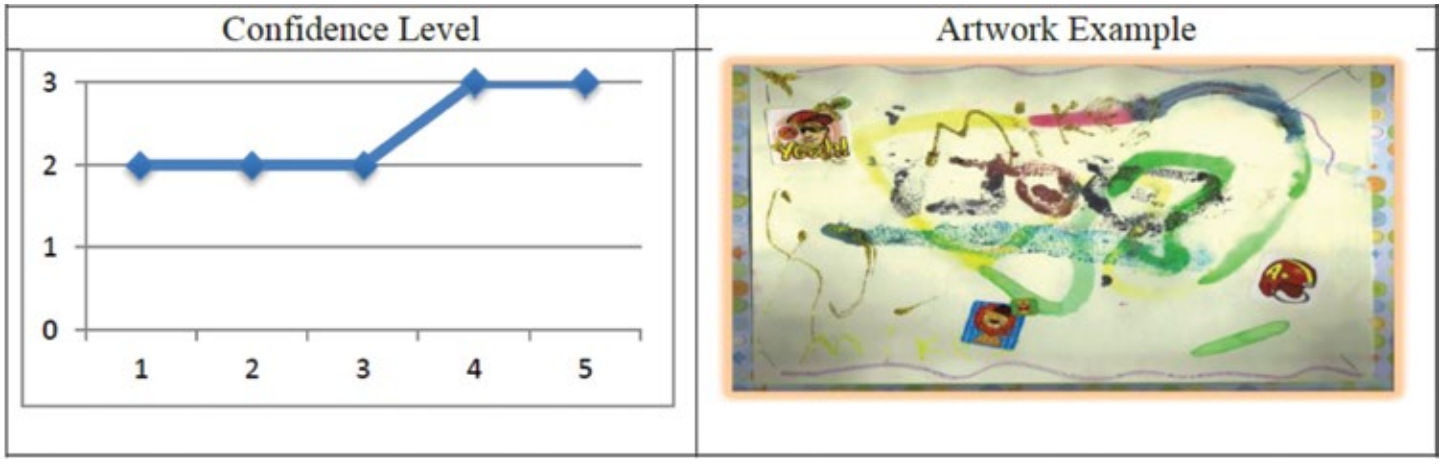


Figure 9. Mikey's self-portraits

children can feel comfortable to use art as a personal way to express their thoughts and emotions so that their ideas and feelings are accepted and valued (Koster, 2012). To support emotional development, teachers do not compare them to others (Morris, 2012): children's progress is based upon a pre or initial stage of development, in consideration of frequently changing and fluctuating developmental gains.

Second, teachers' qualities such as verbal encouragement, modeling empathy, using emotionally expressive language, and showing emotional warmth to each child have been shown to increase confidence, self-control, empathy, and cooperativeness (Spivak & Farran, 2012). Teachers' feedback can help children structure, organize their thoughts, or determine an appropriate direction to take. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide specific feedback about the children's learning processes so that they continue their explorations and extend their knowledge and skills beyond what they already possess (Mulcahey, 2009), rather than generic comments (e.g., "Well done."-"Good job!"). Open-ended questions rather than step by step directions can also provide opportunities for children to initiate ideas, take the lead, and actively contribute to an activity. A heavy reliance on listening to the children's intent for their work is essential in giving feedback, which addresses encouragement not only for the product but also for the process (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2012).

Third, sensitive teachers should let children know that the process of participating in and expressing themselves in art or other creative activities is more important than finished products (Mayesky, 2003). Teachers seek to be judged not on the children's products but on their growth. Instead of giving a model or telling what the final product is supposed to look like, it is important to give children reasonable control over deciding what materials they want to use and how they will approach the product. Providing a wide variety of materials and a sufficient amount of time allows children to select items that match what they are thinking and encourages them to expand their existing ideas.

Art promotes social and emotional development.

Therefore, teachers need to consider the higher values of an open-ended art program versus close-ended crafts. Art areas with divergent choices freely available to the children are preferable to pre-cut or pre-determined art materials and activities. Various materials that can be used to create and to modify would contribute to a strong art area, center or program. Safe materials and objects offered to children should be open-ended, inspiring creative decision-making and problem solving. If the art area is set up for autonomous use with decisions inspired by the artist's imagination, cognitive development is enhanced and confidence is increased (Drew & Rankin, 2004). When using open-ended materials, children develop spontaneous and creative self-expression and develop self-confidence.

Conclusion

This research acknowledged the importance of teacher's emotional support, specific feedback and open-ended questions, and use of open-ended materials. Specifically, children's self-portraits significantly changed by using varied colors, adding more details on clothing and bodily features, or showing positive facial expressions. In conclusion, this research demonstrated how a 10-week art intervention program enhanced preschool children's self-confidence levels.

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The SECA Reporter

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In April, The SECA Reporter transitioned from a traditional newsletter to an on-line blog and we've been very pleased to share comments from your colleagues about thought provoking articles that were posted. We've discussed and shared SECA resources about:

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- Bullying: Should We Be Concerned Before Kindergarten?

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Use of Child Centered Play Therapy Responses in a Child Care Setting

The use of Child Center Play Therapy (CCPT) techniques by caregivers can be effective in encouraging emotional and social development in children.

Joel H. Muro, Lilia Lamar Muro, Katherine Kensinger Rose, Lindsey Webster & Cassie Allen

The communication process between care providers and children can, at times, be complex. Young children typically lack the verbal language necessary for complex emotional expression. In this work, the authors contend that using some basic *child centered play therapy* (CCPT) techniques would be beneficial in enhancing communicative patterns in a childcare setting. The use of CCPT responses by caregivers can be effective in encouraging emotional and social development in children. Because child care providers spend a great deal of time with children, this approach may lead to a more nurturing and stable relationship than parents are able to provide.

Research conducted by the authors has indicated that CCPT in a preschool, primary school, and a variety of other settings with children can be beneficial to the child (Stickley, V. Muro, J, & Blanco, P., 2013). When care providers, therapists, and parents work collaboratively, the use of CCPT responses holds a great deal of potential. The frustrations that seem to exist, especially in emotionally charged situations between the child and care provider, may disappear altogether with the application of many basic play therapy techniques.

In order to understand CCPT, a definition is in order. "Child-centered play therapy is a developmentally appropriate, humanistic, nondirective approach for children that includes the use of toys and play-based materials to facilitate a broad range of verbal and non-verbal expression" (Blanco & Sheely-Moore, 2012, p.66). In addition, Landreth (2012) suggested that responses to children in play therapy should be conducted, "in a way that communicates sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance and conveys freedom and responsibility and is for many beginning play therapists like learning a foreign language" (p. 211).

CCPT responses may assist childcare providers in assuaging children's emotional reactions that may surface in a childcare setting. Ideally, the use of the responses would strengthen the connection between adult and child, allowing the provider to enter the world of the child. When early childhood educators and therapists combine their expertise in the child care setting, environments that once were deemed frightening to children may become welcoming and reassuring.

Play therapy offers a unique opportunity for children to explore their feelings and problems through play, the medium with which they are most comfortable. Play therapy is commonly offered in a therapeutic setting, but is infrequently found in childcare facilities, as many do not employ a play therapist. The authors contend care providers can also apply some basic principles when interacting with children.

CCPT can be a tool in generating communication.

Children who experience a positive relationship with teachers typically are more adjusted to school in comparison to those who have not. According to Sepulveda, Garza, and Morrison (2011) programs such as Head Start have been established for at risk children with the main focus of preparing them for school. Head Start instructors spend copious amounts of time with those children who are enrolled. This gives them the

Courtesy of Knollwood Preschool (Community Church), Burke, VA

Play equals work for young children.

opportunity to provide a more consistent and nurturing relationship than primary caretakers do (Sepulveda et al., 2011). In working with children from challenging backgrounds, CCPT can be a tool in generating communication.

Most children do not have complex verbal and reasoning skills (Wells, 1987; Bruner, 1981; Bloom, 2002). It can be very difficult for a child to fully understand the range of emotions that accompanies difficult life situations. According to Sepulveda et al. (2011), "in such cases, play therapy can be used in order to assist children in creating responses to difficult experiences by using a language that comes natural for them, play" (p. 13). They furthered that children with teachers trained in play therapy showed a noteworthy reduction in "internalizing behavior problems" (p. 15). Overall, research by Sepulveda et al. (2011) suggested that teachers are more than able to learn therapeutic skills such as reflection of content, meaning and feeling(s) and that the use of those skills results in a positive change of behavior in children.

Research by Stubenbort, Donnelly and Cohen (2001) indicated that when children can use play in a structured environment such as a classroom they are able to demonstrate their concerns. A keen observer may gain insight that he or she may not benefit as effectively otherwise. Furthermore, "play therapy is said to decrease internalizing behaviors, interrupt externalizing behaviors, and address trauma-repetitive behaviors" (Stubenbort et al, 2001 p. 53). As a child is able to use play to act out his/her fear and anxiety from abuse, he/she gains power over repetitive behaviors that can be all consuming. The child gains strength and confidence over a past history of hurt through the use of play.

Children are given the opportunity to exhibit and overcome their fears through the use of play. Studies have repeatedly shown that play is the preferred method of treatment with young children, and the outcome is overwhelmingly rewarding for both child and therapist. The use of play therapy in the classroom can be rewarding on many levels. Not only does the child benefit through the use of play but also the teacher and classmates do as well. Through CCPT, a child is able to work through maladaptive behaviors in a

safe environment, thereby increasing his or her social skills and adaptability.

Industry vs. Inferiority

During the elementary years, Erikson (1950/1963) described the child as one who "learns to win recognition by producing things" (p. 259). According to Erikson, it is during this stage that children begin to evaluate themselves based on external standards set by others. Erikson stated, "The child's danger, at this stage, lies in a sense of inadequacy and inferiority" (p. 260). More simply stated, the developmental task of the child during the elementary years is to gain a feeling of productiveness and acceptance for that productiveness. Erikson stated, "We have pointed in the last section to the danger threatening individual and society where the schoolchild begins to feel that the color of his skin, the background of his parents, or the fashion of his clothes rather than his wish and his will to learn will decide his worth…" (p. 260). Working with children from an Eriksonian perspective requires that adults focus mostly on the "wish and the will" (p. 260) in providing children with feedback on their actions, behaviors, and academic, creative, or athletic endeavors. This has important implications for early childhood educators who may be focused on outcomes or behavior more so than the process of being. Allowing children to be, to feel and to connect to the self can be of benefit.

Childcare Providers and Developmental Influence

As children begin to mature and separate from their parents, external people become influential in the child's development. Childcare providers are among this group of adults who are crucial to children. Childcare providers are an important component when considering how children learn, develop social interest, enhance goal setting, create a solid work ethic, form healthy relationships, and build autonomy and self-esteem (Illig, 1998).

The ability of caregivers to support children's autonomy is an indicator of meeting the child's psychological needs. This push for autonomy, while in a supportive environment, results in higher self-esteem and a greater sense of identity (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009).

The work of a child is play.

In an effort to help early childhood educators foster positive developmental outcomes in children with whom they work, we are advocating a new communicative model for caregivers to accomplish goals related to the fostering of emotional, physical, and social development. By integrating play therapy principles of unconditional positive regard and techniques such as reflection of feeling into their teaching and behavior interventions and using a developmental approach in understanding children's behaviors and needs, child care specialists/ early childhood educators may be able to influence children positively in multiple domains.

There are a variety of discussions and viewpoints of play by well-noted scholars. A surfeit of information analyzing play from diverse perspectives is easily accessible (Erikson, 1950/1963; Piaget, 1962; Smilansky, 1990; Vygotsky, 2004). Most agree that the work of a child is play, and it is through hands-on manipulation of objects that they master their environment. Piaget (1962) and Erikson (1950/1963) both acknowledge the importance of the child's own body as the center of play. Piaget theorized about and investigated the importance of play to cognitive development. The idea that a child's behavior and thoughts are separate but connected through play is arguably his most important hypothesis. Through meticulous play observations, it is evident that play allows children to express their inner desires, feelings, problems, and anxieties (Piaget, 1962).

Child-Centered Play Therapy

Child-centered therapy, derived from Carl Rogers' (1951) theoretical framework, is the approach many child centered counselors use with children and adult clients. Virginia Axline (1969/1982) utilized Rogers' concepts to develop child-centered play therapy (Axline, 1950; Ginott, 1961; Guerney, 1991; Landreth, 2012; Moustakas, 1951; Ray, 2004; Rogers, 1951).

The relationship created in play therapy gives children the autonomy to express themselves in the precise moment. In the therapeutic setting, children are given the freedom to act without the pressures of external expectations, offering them the therapeutic benefits of play proposed by Erikson (1950/1963) in his theory of psychosocial development. Children have the power to decide how they will use play to express themselves through this non-directive style (Axline, 1950).

Photo Courtesy of Pre-K 4, San Antonio, Texas

Reflective listening can strengthen adult/child relationships.

A relationship develops between children and therapists, centered on the play therapy materials. This coincides with the adult's hope that play can be therapeutic and healing (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2005). Consistent with Erikson's (1950/1963) ideas about the therapeutic benefits of play, child-centered play therapy posits that play is often symbolic, offering insight into the struggles and terrors that might be haunting the child. Play is considered the child's language, with toys being the child's worlds, which catalyze communication and expression (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel 2005; Landreth, 2012).

In order to understand the child's conscious and unconscious world, it is imperative to be a mindful and active, but non-invasive and non-directive, participant of the child's play (Bettleheim, 1987). Adults use speech as their natural form of communication, but children are not as comfortable with using speech as their primary communication tool, seeing as verbal skills are not as adroit as their older counterparts. Play therapy is supported by the premise that play is the child's mode of self-expression (Schaefer, 1985).

In order to truly understand the world of the child, the play therapist employs a variety of techniques, foremost being the presence of the caring therapist and the ability of the therapist to accurately track and communicate empathically to the child. While all facilitate growth and movement, the authors hypothesize that reflective listening, a standard technique used by all play therapists, is the procedure that may best assist caregivers in more effectively communicating with their players.

Reflective Listening

Verbal tracking, reflection of content, and reflection of feeling are reflective listening techniques that may be employed by the caregiver who wishes to use CCPT. The authors concur with Bratton and Landreth (2006), regarding to how to most effectively use reflective listening. Verbally mirroring and validating children's presence describes verbal tracking. For example, when a child runs down the field to catch a pass, an appropriate tracking response would be "You are jumping up and down about your catch."

Reflecting content is a technique used to convey a sense of comprehension as to what children are stating. Because of the frequent misunderstanding of reflecting content as parroting, restructuring children's responses is strongly advised. For example, "I drank my water without spilling!" might prompt a reply of, "You got it up to your mouth and back down on the table!" Using reflection of content is a basic form of connecting with children.

In order to develop empathy and communicate understanding of the

child's world, using responses that reflect feelings are best suited. In response to the above example, an appropriate reflection of feeling might be, "You are excited about your not spilling!" This statement notes you are attending to the child as well as understanding the child's emotional reaction to something that seems to be creating a degree of pride can be described as an empathic response.

Empathy is the ability to understand another person's emotional perspective without being personally consumed by the feelings. This is commonly known as reflection of feeling. A person adept at reflection of feeling might offer an understanding comment replete with feeling words. For example, a child might say, "I said my ABC's!" The caregiver employing reflective listening techniques might first praise the child "Way to go!" and then follow with the reflection of feeling, "You are proud of yourself!"

Play & Caregiving

Because of the developmental aspects of both play therapy and the setting of caregiving, integrating these techniques is feasible. Axline (1969/ 1982) developed basic principles to use in a therapeutic setting with children. One of her seminal points was her assertion that adults need to accept the child with feelings of warmth and friendliness. This is sometimes called unconditional positive regard, a term created by Carl Rogers (1951). It is not accepting all the behaviors a child exhibits, but accepting the child because s/he exists. The caregiver communicates acceptance through entering the world of the child and using reflective statements, ensuring the child knows s/he has been heard. By creating this open atmosphere, children are more likely to build a relationship with adults founded on trust. This rapport empowers children to express their thoughts and feelings without feeling censored or judged. While she created these principles for play therapists, they can be generalized to adults who come into contact with children, specifically caregivers.

Children draw from their personal experience to converse with adults. It is vital to recognize that children have other experiences outside of the learning environment the caregiver occupies from which they will draw. Children will use nonverbal communication in addition to actions and words to alert adults of feelings and needs.

Reflective listening may best assist caregivers.

Likely, caregivers may not look for the same outcome as play therapists, but they still have the opportunity to use the play therapy responses that mirror the interactions exercised in a playroom. Understanding the feeling the child has around the specific incident and communicating as such with reflection of feeling may soothe the child and strengthen the bond. A child who is upset might like hearing "You feel really mad (or sad)." The authors assert that the strong development of verbal and nonverbal communication skills, providing positive feedback, giving attention, listening, being clear and concise, and building a trusting and caring relationship with the children will strengthen not only the relationship but also the child's self esteem and self efficacy.

Reflective Responses and Caregiving

Feelings are the pathway for understanding and acceptance. Children learn to handle their emotions through the simple acknowledgment of the existence of their feelings. Play therapists use reflections of feeling to facilitate an understanding with children that their feelings are suitable. The act of rescuing children from their feelings or ignoring the feelings deprives them of the opportunity to learn how to handle them and can have consequences later in life, as they develop complex defenses to hide and contend with them.

Perhaps one of the more common experiences for adults to do is to discount children or attempt to change their negative perceptions because these feelings are difficult to manage. Adults often struggle with feelings themselves and having to contend with another who is not yet developed fully and may have strong emotional reactions is a daunting task. Statements such as, "Stop being upset at nap time and sleep." or, "The other children will take turns: you do not need to worry." can adversely affect children's feelings. Statements like these force children to accept what others want them to feel, while denying their own experience. As noted prior, the authors are not advocating for an acceptance for all behaviors, merely that every feeling evidenced by the behaviors is valid and worthy.

The reflection of feelings and behaviors (tracking) are the most vital techniques for relaying what is happening in the moment, immediacy. Questions are considered a hindrance to therapy because they create defensiveness in children and take them out of their present experience. One might argue this would

Photo courtesy of Pre-K 4, San Antonio, Texas

Play is often symbolic for young children.

be the same in a childcare setting. The act of answering a question requires children to remove themselves from what they are experiencing. When the early childhood educator addresses the child with a reflection of feeling, it is possible that the child will be more open to the constructive criticism that may follow. For example, an early childhood educator might say to a student, "You're frustrated that you cannot draw a circle. I understand why you might feel that way. Perhaps if you changed the way you have your arm, you'd find this an easier process."

Reflecting feeling is a basic level of response that encourages a deeper understanding of children. By engaging in this communication pattern, the early childhood educator then is relating to the child the four basic tenets of listening, "I am here, I hear you, I understand, and I care." While early childhood educators are learning this new style of communicating, it is helpful to understand four primary feelings: happy, angry, sad, and surprised (Landreth, 2012). Because feelings are often portrayed in the face of a child, it is important to attend to facial expressions (Bratton & Landreth, 2006).

Feelings can be detected not only through facial expressions, but through body language as well. Once caregivers have determined that a child is experiencing a feeling, the opportunity to reflect feeling should be grasped to communicate that the caregiver understands the child's current world. The authors recommend that when using reflection of feeling, caregivers should attempt to match the intensity level of the feeling that the child is experiencing. For example, if a child is disappointed about sharing a toy, an appropriate reflection of feeling may be, "You are sad the rules are we share." or "You are really discouraged that we share." combined with a softer tone.

To ensure that the reflection captures the emotion as opposed to a cognitive statement about what the child thinks, begin reflections of feeling with "you feel" or "you are feeling" instead of "you feel like." The reader can note that you can interchange "you think" for "you feel like" and see how cognition is being addressed, but not feeling. Engaging in this pattern of responses to players then allows the child to feel understood by the early childhood educator, and will promote a deeper level of trust between the two parties as well as feeling connected and heard.

Making the distinction between encouragement and praise is also important. Focusing on the motivation, intent, and process involved in the child's efforts (encouragement) is much more influential than offering

a compliment on a final product (praise). For example, rather than stating, "Good picture.", an early childhood educator might instead say, "I could see how hard you were trying!" Focusing the child's attention on the effort rather than the end result helps them to understand the path to success and allows each child to feel successful (industrious). And, as the children begin to feel more successful, the early childhood educator reaps benefits in that the child will endeavor for greater personal success.

Conclusions

It can be argued that caregivers are significant figures as well as role models. Therefore, a caregiver who enters the child's world and attempts to understand and communicate effectively offers an example of positive, healthy relationships. Doing so might create a situation where a coach has an impact that can last beyond childhood. By employing some of the methods offered in the work, the authors assert that this communicative style can enrich and enhance what is already a very meaningful relationship between caregiver and child.

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Meeting National Expectations for Partnering with Families

The vast majority of state standards do not align with family involvement guidelines from national organizations. This article introduces six national organizations, presents key themes resulting from an analysis of standards, and proposes ideas for those interested in infusing their programs with nationally recognized best practices for family involvement

Claudia Sánchez
& Bridget Walsh

The field of early childhood education supports the notions that early childhood programs need the active support of families and that the school and the home are the most critical environments impacting children's development (Mart, Dusenbury, & Weissberg, 2011). These ideas are consistent with the extant literature on family involvement and provide the foundation for the expectations and guidelines contained in standards developed by six national organizations and forums for parent and family involvement.

A recent study (Walsh, Sánchez, Lee, Casillas, & Hansen, 2016) analyzed the expectations and guidelines contained in the national standards vis à vis 51 sets of state-level early learning and development standards for preschool children. This study determined that the vast majority of state standards examined did not align with family involvement guidelines from the national organizations. In the cases where state standards did align with the national guidelines, the state standards made reference to family concepts in a peripheral fashion – outside the statements describing what students are supposed to know and be able to do. The present article briefly introduces the six national organizations Walsh et al. (2016) analyzed, presents key themes that resulted from this analysis, and proposes ideas for implementation for those interested in infusing their programs with nationally recognized best practices for family involvement practices. Next, we introduce the national organizations and forums whose guidelines for family involvement provided the basis for Walsh et al.'s analysis of state-level standards for early learning and development.

The Six National Organizations & Forums

Family Support America's Guidelines for Family Support Practice

This organization is dedicated to providing the information, support, and connections that families need. In the early1990s, a group of family support leaders convened to discuss a conceptual framework for training in family support. At their request, Family Support America (then called the Family Resource Coalition) undertook the task of defining best practices in family support programs. This project enlisted extensive participation from local family support practitioners from the U.S. and Canada. More than 350 programs comprising 2000 people participated in facilitated focus-groups for staff and parents participating in the programs. The analyzed focus-group data became the basis of the *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* (Family Support America, 2001), which have benefited from the collaboration of a wide array of practitioners, family participants in programs, scholars, and advocates of family support.

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP, Processes of Family Involvement and Young Children's Outcomes)[1]

HFRP was founded in 1983 and its mission is to promote more effective educational practices, programs, and policies for disadvantaged children and youth through the generation, publication, and dissemination of research. HFRP's basic belief is that for all children to be successful from birth through adolescence, mul-

[1] *As of January 2017, The Harvard Family Research Project is no longer affiliated with Harvard University. It is called Global Family Research Project.*

tiple learning supports beyond the school should be linked to work in tandem towards consistent learning and developmental outcomes (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC's) Guidelines for Establishing Reciprocal Relationships with Families

The purpose of the current NAEYC position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8 is to promote excellence in early childhood education by providing a framework for best practices. The position statement's fifth guideline is devoted to establishing reciprocal relationships with families (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009).

NAEYC's Principles for Effective Family Engagement

In 2010, NAEYC—in collaboration with Pre-K Now—endorsed key principles of family engagement (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009; NAEYC, 2010).

Head Start's Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework

The PFCE Framework was developed in partnership with programs, families, experts, and the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. It provides programs with an organizational guide for implementing relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards. The Framework is a research-based approach to program change with a focus on parent and family engagement and children's learning development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2011).

Early childhood programs need the active support of families.

National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA) Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Drawing on the research findings from Henderson and Mapp (2002), the PTA updated their former standards, titled *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*, to improve parent and community involvement practices. The updated National Standards, now titled *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships*, focus on what parents, schools, and communities can do together to support student success (National Parent Teacher Association, 2014).

Family Involvement Expectations from Six National Organizations

National standards contain high-quality principles or guidelines aimed to improve the condition of education by raising the bar for education stakeholders. Although states usually do not adopt national standards in their entirety, many states use these standards to inform the process of developing their own (Mart et al., 2011). Walsh et al. analyzed the principles, guidelines, and standards for family involvement/engagement/partnerships previously developed by six national organizations and forums with the purpose of creating a framework for the analysis of early learning and development standards from 51 states. Walsh et al.'s analytical framework consisted of seven overarching themes. These themes constituted the coding categories of the instrument used to analyze state-level standards, and these categories represented main themes related to the field's expectations of family engagement, involvement, and family-school partnerships in early childhood education according to the six national sources examined (Walsh et al., 2016).

We now present the key themes (coding categories) derived from Walsh et al.'s analysis. Under these themes, which we present in the form of *recommendations*, we share ideas for implementation for schools and centers dedicated to serving young children.

Key Themes/ Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Incorporate families'/parents' home language

The importance of incorporating families'/parents' home language into programs serving young learners is a guideline stressed across the national principles and guidelines examined. Validating families' native language is a way to involve parents by acknowledging and celebrating their cultural and linguistic identity (De Gaetano, 2007). In addition, the use of families' preferred language allows for meaningful, two-way, school-home communication. The practices below can help school personnel validate families' language.

Take a language course. Becoming proficient in a second language

Photo courtesy of SECA Family Engagement Contest/Submitted by Bright Beginnings/Siloam Springs, AR

This early childhood program "welcomes families and friends to gather here."

takes a long time, but one does not need to be fully proficient in a second language to start communicating in it. Fundamental second language courses allow learning basic communication skills and can take the form of an online learning tool (such as Mango Languages available at https://www.mangolanguages.com/, whose focus is oral proficiency in over 70 languages) or a face-to-face experience (such as tutoring sessions where the tutor and student take turns as teacher and learner) (Sánchez, 2015).

Use proverbs in the home language. Two obstacles facing many Hispanic Spanish-speaking communities are school-home language barriers as well as families' need of familiarity with U.S. school practices and policies. One possible way to counter these obstacles in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way may be the use of *dichos* or proverbs/folk sayings in the Spanish language (Sánchez, 2009). *Dichos*, or popular sayings, may prove effective in enhancing communication between the school and Spanish-speaking families since they are a key component of the Hispanic oral culture and Spanish language discourse. *Dichos* are deemed as culturally and linguistically appropriate tools for family involvement. Rooted in oral tradition, dichos are commonly used by Spanish-speaking people to express their values, attitudes, and perceptions (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Given their cultural and linguistic relevance among Spanish speakers, and their potential to impact individuals' belief systems, dichos may also influence the ways parents bring up a child, as well as families' style of communication and their thoughts about formal education (Sánchez, 2015).

Dichos can be used as slogans or mottos to encourage behaviors conducive to family involvement (Sánchez et al., 2010). Teachers, administrators, and other school staff can incorporate the slogans or mottos to communicate with families in settings where Spanish is spoken. For example, if teachers wish to partner with parents in the education of heir children, one dicho to help persuade parents to become involved is *"Dos cabezas piensan mejor que una."* which means *"Two minds are better than one."* The *dicho* could be used to convey the idea that neither the school nor the home will help children succeed when working in isolation. Another helpful *dicho* that could help persuade families to join efforts with the school is *"En la unión está la fuerz."* which means *"In unity, there is strength."* This dicho also conveys the idea that good outcomes are achieved when the school and the home work in tandem to help children succeed. Schools can integrate families' *dichos* into flyers, e-mails, posters, websites, and other methods of communication. Also, *dichos* can be used as opening remarks at teacher-parent conferences or meetings.

In settings where Spanish is not commonly used, it is recommended that teachers and school staff integrate *dichos* into their communication efforts with families; however, it is critical that dichos be used appropriately and in a meaningful way. Native speakers of Spanish can assist school staff adapt the use of *dichos* when communicating with parents. A popular bilingual resource book that can provide non-Spanish-speaking teachers and school staff basic guidance on the use of *dichos* is titled *101 Spanish Proverbs* (Aparicio, 2009).

Recommendation 2: Engage in regular, meaningful, two-way communication with families

The quantity and quality of efforts to communicate with and engage families predict the level of family involvement in school (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). National principles and guidelines for school-family communication stress the impor-

tance of the regular nature of this interaction, as well as its significance and bi-directionality (from school to home and from home to school) (National PTA, 2014; NAEYC, 2009).

Unless there is evidence of a two-way home/school communication that is frequent and sustained throughout the school year every year, no school could claim that it succeeds in involving families or that it can relate well to families' languages and cultures (Sánchez, 2015). Family involvement is often a difficult goal to achieve. Differences between minority family and school cultures frequently become barriers that hinder effective communication and prevent schools and families from developing successful partnerships (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). In addition to school and home language barriers, other obstacles often include families' contextual factors, families' and schools' cultural beliefs with respect to the roles of parents and schools, families' lack of familiarity with U.S. school practices, policies, children's academics including the subject matter of homework, and families' exclusion and discrimination by educational staff or organizations (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005b). Although research shows that most parental involvement efforts launched by schools are directed to minority parents and families, these efforts often have a low rate of success due to the ways in which schools attempt parental and family involvement approaches (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005b). Using families' preferred ways of communication and integrating communication strategies that maximize family involvement are two practices encouraged by the published literature.

Use families' preferred ways of communication. Effective family involvement strategies can be identified by asking families about the ways in which they prefer to communicate with the school. Successful strategies for minority families have included warm and positive face-to-face conversations, personalized phone calls (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Vazquez-Nuttall, Li, & Kapplan, 2006), and monthly parent meetings. Also, informal interactions and personal relationships with teachers have been found successful.

Incorporate a child's home language into your program.

Communication strategies for maximizing family involvement. Trumbull and Pacheco's (2005b) guidelines for maximizing family involvement include four suggestions.

- **First**, have informal and personal interactions with families that make families feel comfortable asking questions or sharing information.
- **Second**, be flexible about scheduling conferences, meetings, and volunteer opportunities to allow for more parental responsiveness.
- **Third**, work closely with paraprofessionals and school volunteers from students' communities, as well as staff from community-based organizations, to facilitate communication and a genuine two-way understanding.
- **Fourth**, reach out to families both formally and informally.

Recommendation 3: Encourage the formation of programs by and for the community

Children's development and learning is deeply grounded in the context of their community (Molina, 2013), and it is the role of the community to strengthen both program and family functions, as well as to encourage optimal child development and learning (Epstein, 2011). To encourage the formation of a program by and for the community, national organizations highlight the need for programs to continually embed themselves in the community and its building process (Family Support America, 2001). It is also critical for programs to be responsive to emerging family and community issues (Family Support America, 2001) and to link families with a wide array of available services and opportunities to address families' priorities and concerns (NAEYC, 2010; National PTA, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2011). Since one cannot successfully grow that which one does not know well, perhaps the first step toward creating a program by and for the community is for school leaders and staff to get to know students' and families' cultures and communities through cultural self-immersion experiences (Sánchez, 2015).

Immerse yourself in families' cultures. To engage families in linguistically and culturally sensitive ways (De Gaetano, 2007), school leaders, teachers, and staff need to be familiar with the cultures of the children's families and communities. Learning about another culture is best done through direct experience with that culture and by immersing one's self in it (instead of studying the culture from afar). Schools and center staff

Photo courtesy of SECA Family Engagement Contest/Submitted by The University of Alabama Children's Program

Opportunities to share the cultural backgrounds of families can be created by programs

need first-hand experience with the cultures with which they aim to establish long-term, meaningful, and regular communication (Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006). Learning about another's culture is an inside-out process that starts by examining and re-examining one's own values and beliefs in light of the similarities and differences between one's own culture and that of the other. Immersing one's self in another culture requires engaging in experiences that will teach one about families' and community's values, customs, beliefs, and communication patterns. A good place to start a cultural immersion process may be community-based organizations, since these can help introduce families' cultures (Warren, 2005) and serve as cultural and language brokers for schools and families alike. Some examples of the ways in which school and center leaders and staff can immerse themselves in the community's cultures include:

- Visiting students' neighborhoods and their homes
- Learning from families when conducting home visits and talking to students' family members (grandparents, extended family members)
- Going to places where the community gathers socially, such as churches and temples
- Shopping at grocery stores within families' communities
- Watching television or listening to the radio with students and families, and
- Listening to the music grandparents, parents, and children like and asking what the lyrics to the songs mean

Once engaged in these experiences, one can reflect on the ways in which one is culturally similar to and different from students' families and their communities. This continued reflection has the potential to promote a deeper intercultural understanding and, as a result, a solid basis for the formation of a program by the community and for the community.

A community-driven program identifies and integrates resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning development (Epstein, 2011). Program practices may include:

- Sharing information with families on resources and services related to community health, cultural, recreational, and social support, and other community programs. Information includes resource directories, and advice on how to locate and use resources and services.

- Encouraging service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies/organizations, and businesses.
- Promoting service to the community provided by families and schools (for example, recycling, art, music, and other activities for seniors and others).

Recommendation 4: Support family advocacy and decision making

National standards and guidelines for family involvement state that programs should advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to families served (Family Support America, 2001). Practices that may assist in advocating for children and families in poverty include forming and participating in multicultural committees for family advocacy, having a system in place to identify and advise families in need, and encouraging professional development activities focused on student and family advocacy.

Form and participate in multicultural school committees for family advocacy. The vital role of educators' advocacy for students and families is well documented in the literature, and is also part of teacher education standards and competencies (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005a). School leaders who are well aware of their own and teachers' roles as advocates consequently support the development of educator advocates through the creation of family advocacy committees. The committees can consist of teachers, aides, community members, administrators, and parent representatives. To get started, members can define their general goal for advocacy as well as specific objectives with corresponding tasks and benchmarks. In defining a general goal for advocacy, stakeholders should consider that efforts to strengthen collaborations among schools, families, and community-based organizations can contribute to the larger political and social efficacy of neighborhoods and communities (Warren, 2005). Advocacy committees can assist in bridging the gap between the school culture and families' cultures by promoting deeper intercultural understanding (Sánchez, 2015; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005a).

Establish a system to identify and advise families in need. From parent support and education to health care and financial assistance, today's school leaders, teachers, and personnel must be knowledgeable of community resources that can assist families in need. Further, schools must find ways to make families aware of such resources and to advise families on how to access help. Effective school leader and staff advocates are well aware that all assistance to families must be communicated in the language families speak well. In the contexts of schools that offer families classes on native language literacy, English as a second language, GED, parenting, and computer literacy (Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006), further advocacy efforts can be built into this infrastructure. Schools that do not offer these classes to families could start their advocacy efforts through the creation of classes in areas of interest to the community.

A multilingual literacy night can achieve multiple goals…family engagement and the advancement of child and family literacy.

Photo courtesy of SECA Family Engagement Contest/ Submitted by the University of South Florida Preschool for Creative Learning

Recommendation 5: Foster families'/parents' active participation in the school setting

According to national standards and guidelines for family involvement in schools and centers dedicated to the education of young children, families' active participation in the life of the school is essential (NAEYC, 2009; 2010; National PTA, 2014). In these programs, it is critical that families feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are doing in class (NAEYC, 2009; National PTA, 2014). Families also share their unique knowledge and skills while they participate in parent-teacher conferences, extended class visits, and class activities (Weiss et al., 2006).

To foster families' active participation in the school setting, leaders and staff need to recognize that families' understanding of parental

involvement may differ from the schools. As well, leaders and staff need to raise awareness among families about the ways in which the school system works.

Recognize that families' understanding of parental involvement may differ from the school's. Different cultural groups understand the role of parents in children's education in different ways. Culturally diverse families' beliefs and practices often differ from schools' expectations (De Gaetano, 2007). For example, many Hispanic families, especially recent immigrants from rural areas, may understand that their role is not to interfere with the school's or teacher's work. This understanding may translate into refraining from visiting the school or classroom and not expressing their opinions or asking questions of the teacher or school staff. To many Hispanic families who have not yet fully assimilated to the dominant culture, these behaviors are often synonymous with respect for and trust in the teacher's work. In some instances, however, educators will mistake these behaviors for disengagement or indifference.

School leaders and staff should find out how families view involvement, and should not assume families share the school's beliefs. Ask families how they wish to participate in their children's education, let them know what the school recommends they do to become involved, and assure them that it is appropriate–and expected–to visit, ask questions, and share their opinions about their children's schooling. Also, once you have identified how the school and family expectations differ, be flexible in terms of what you expect from families and take cues from parents and families as to what they feel is appropriate for them in terms of their involvement in their children's education (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005b).

Raise awareness among families about the way the school system works. Family involvement in children's schooling is successful if it results in teachers' increased understanding of their students' families and communities, as well as families' increased understanding of how schools operate (Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006). Rather than assuming families know their way through the school system, school leaders and staff should investigate how much they really do know. To this end, schools should conduct informal group talks and share any vital information parents may wish to know (Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006).

Parents familiar with the way the school system works understand the meaning of schooling concepts such as homework, desirable reading habits, report cards, standardized tests, and the PTA. Families unaware of how the school system works may be unfamiliar with the meaning or implications of these concepts, so may need abundant information and guidance to successfully internalize new understandings of schooling (Sánchez, 2015).

Become an informed advocate for families.

Recommendation 6: Support parents/family-child relationships

One of the main goals of early childhood education is to support parent-child relationships (NAEYC, 2009). In addition to active family/parental participation, national standards and guidelines prescribe the need for nurturing, warm, and responsive family/parent-child relationships that encourage children's positive learning and development outcomes (Weiss et al., 2006; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2011).

According to Epstein (2011), a key to successful school, family, and community partnerships involves schools' efforts to assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. For example, families need to be aware that talking with children and exposing them to rich oral language is the basis for literacy development. Also, families' encouragement and guidance allow children to explore their world and thrive in physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains.

Dialogues on parenting and optimal childrearing practices can be furthered by workshops/parent education classes, videos, online content, and phone messages. For example, educators can share with families a video clip of a high quality parent-child interaction alongside a low quality parent-child interaction and co-construct with parents what defines differences in quality. A good source for videos is *Ready Rosie,* available at http://www.readyrosie.com

Recommendation 7: Promote the role of families/parents as teachers

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development at home, at school, and in their communities. In addition, families and school staff have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills (NAEYC, 2010; National PTA, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2011). Educators can empower parents to support their children academically at home (Epstein, 2011) by sharing ideas on how to become involved through reading, homework, monitoring and discussing schoolwork at home, discussing time management and scheduling of curricular and extra-curricular activities, setting academic goals with children, and other curriculum-related activities and decisions. An example of a parent-involved assessment that families might consider as a starting point to set goals for the child is the *Ages and Stages Questionnaires-3* (ASQ-3; Squires & Bricker, 2009). ASQ has a reputation for being parent friendly because it offers parent education and relies on parents' vast knowledge of their children when screening for developmental milestones and delays between the ages of one month to five and a half years (Squires & Bricker, 2009). Teachers and administrators can find more information at the ASQ website (www.agesandstages.com) and purchase the ASQ-3 through Brookes Publishing Company.

Closing Remarks

The early childhood education field prescribes the idea that early childhood programs need the active support of families and that school and home are important environments impacting children's development (Mart et al., 2011). No matter how effective an early childhood program may be in connecting with families, there always is room for re-envisioning one's current family involvement practices by gauging the extent to which such practices respond to national guidelines, standards, and expectations. This article presented ideas for meeting national expectations endorsed by national organizations and forums supportive of family involvement. School leaders, teachers, and other school personnel are encouraged to reflect on their own family involvement practices and to continue their efforts to achieve solid school-family partnerships whose end goal is children's successful academic growth and social development.

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SECA's Commitment to Play and Outdoor Learning

A Wealth of Professional Resources

From *Dimensions of Early Childhood & Dimensions Extra*

The 2013 and 2014 issues of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* and *Dimensions Extra* featured articles on the programs recognized for Exemplary Outdoor Classrooms. Each issue of the journal highlighted programs and *Dimensions Extra* provided additional resources that could be accessed to assist in developing outdoor classrooms.

Copies of these journals are archived at http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/members_only.php for SECA members.

From Our Monthly Membership E-mail Articles

These e-mails are archived on the SECA website and available on the "members-only" section of the website. You'll find them under the section, **Members E-mail Articles.** There is an informational article and either a parent or staff flyer (or maybe both!) about the topic. Look for these specific e-mail articles on the topic of play and outdoor learning.

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Should Technology Be a Concern for Parents of Preschoolers?

Traditional play and technology play are two ways that young children engage in play today. Parents struggle with the amount of time allocated for technology play because their kids want it often. This article provides insights from a study focused on whether technology should be a concern to parents and parental perceptions about children's play.

Lori DeShelter & Ruslan Slutsky

Due to an influx of new technology, children today have more options for how they engage in play through technology than ever before. Computers, tablets, hand held video games and parents' cell phones are among the numerous technologies that affect children's playtime. Children are opting to play with technology much more readily than with other forms of play as indicated in the following scenario.

> *My son is glued to his tablet. He wants to play it all the time. When he is told not to use it, I often hear the words, "I'm bored." I suggest reading a book or playing outside but those options are not popular. We have some kids in our neighborhood, but not many, so playing outside with other kids is not something that is always an option. Many spend time playing inside. A few minutes later, "I'm bored, can I watch TV?" I offer other suggestions but none seem to help. He continues to want to return to his tablet to play the next popular app he has discovered. My son is 9 years old but this behavior has been prevalent even when he was in preschool. I have tried to limit his play with technology but will find him sneaking into his room and playing it when he is not supposed to. The allure of technology has become so great that it is the number one choice when playtime is an option.*

The scenario above is probably something many parents (like many of us) can relate to well. They struggle with the amount of time allocated for technology play because their kids want it, often wondering, "How do we manage technology? Should we manage technology?" Those are the questions we wrestle with as we try to balance the types of experiences we want our children to have as they are growing, developing and learning. In this article we discuss parental perceptions of how children play and their children's use of technology. It is important to note that we define traditional play as interactions with people and objects that are not technological in nature. Further, we define technology play as any play that incorporates a form of technology in its use.

Parents and Technology

Parents are responsible for providing children with opportunities to play and exposure to technology as they see fit. Access to home technology use may be heavily dependent upon parental education, lifestyle, cultural practice, and family. We have found that aside from children's age, parents are a contributing factor to the use of media (Slutsky and DeShetler, 2016). Understandably, parents serve as providers and therefore directly impact the availability and use of technology in the home.

A point of view to consider is the possible relationship between children's media use and parental education. Anand and Krosnick (2005) examined whether the mother and fathers' education had an impact on the technology in which children engaged. The researchers found that children of both mothers and fathers with less education watched more television. Children of fathers who had some college education or who graduated college spent more time on computers than those whose fathers had the lowest level of education. Therefore, parental education may be a catalyst in predicting some aspects of children's technology use. Anand and Krosnick explain that other factors such as parental values should be examined. "The values that more educated parents bring to child rearing lead them to discourage television viewing more and to advocate other activities instead" (p. 557).

For parents, technology may serve in the capacity of a babysitter in the home (Plowman, 2013). Plowman addresses the lifestyle of today's parents, commenting that technology is an attractive alternative due to the exhaustion caused by work. Technology serves in this role to occupy the child's time while the parent is provided an opportunity to do something else. Plowman (2013) reports that parents also feel that a balance between traditional play (non-technology) and technology use is necessary. This suggests that parents may still place importance on more traditional play like creative, dramatic and constructive play.

Shiakou and Belsky (2013) conducted research on parental attitudes toward children's play. The researchers conducted a study of 142 Greek/Cypriot parents of children between the ages of 4 and 7 who were enrolled in preschool. The demographic information collected included parents' age, education, income, and hours of employment. The researchers reviewed previous studies about parents' perceptions of children's educational programs and their beliefs about play. Through this process and in the collection of data from their study, an overarching theme emerged. They discovered that parental differences were rooted in cultural practice and as a result, parental beliefs affected the ways in which children played. According to the researchers, "parental attitudes toward play and learning differ within…cultures, and that the parental practices used to encourage children academically and the time allocated, or left, for play also differs between cultures" (p. 21).

Hofferth (2010) examined children's home technology use, achievement, and behavior, and the relationship with parental involvement. The study consisted of children between the ages of 6 and 12 who lived with their mothers. Participants were asked to record the child's activities over a 24-hour period. Hofferth (2010) discovered that technology use was dependent upon attributes of parental education and family income. Moreover, children's dependence upon their parents creates a control system in which the parents' characteristics determine the children's media use. Therefore, factors such as parental education, lifestyle, culture, and income play an important role in the availability and use of technology in the home. In this study, the researchers wanted to understand parents' perceptions regarding their children's play and use of technology.

Parental backgrounds help determine children's media use.

Should Technology Use be Limited?

Some parents believe that technology should be used in moderation (Slutsky and DeShetler, 2016). Parents carry a certain set of beliefs that impact how their child plays and engages with technology, and these perceptions also determine whether they feel the need to set limitations. At the present time, little information is available to guide parents in determining what kind of limitations should be placed on technology use especially at the preschool age (Hofferth, 2010; Neumann, 2015). According to Hofferth (2010), few studies of children's technology use exist that compare similar groups of children or break data down by age. In order to establish guidelines to aid parents in setting limitations, research is needed that examines the context of use: How preschoolers use technology such as tablets and for what reasons (Neumann, 2015). Wiles, Schachtner, and Pentz (2016) argue that young children benefit most from human interaction and that parents who allow any screen time "should do everything in their power to engage in screen time with their children in active ways" (p. 1).

Regardless of the experience, digital devices have entered into the picture and are a prominent fixture in children's daily lives. Before we can understand how technology impacts the development of preschool children, further research is warranted to delineate children's activities and what parents attribute to their reasoning for promoting or rejecting technology use in the home as there seems to be a gap. It is important to highlight not only the parental beliefs that affect the amount and type of technology used in the home, but also how decisions may have emerged from cultural practice and personal experiences.

The Study

Our study focused on whether technology should be a concern to parents: Specifically, we wanted to learn about the parents' thoughts and beliefs about their children's play and technology use. The researchers focused on:

- parents' perception of what they considered play to be
- the different ways in which their children played

- how often they played indoors and outdoors
- how much time they engaged in technology play

A total of 6 (5 female, 1 male) parents were recruited to participate in open-ended interviews focusing on their children's play. All six parents had a preschool child between the age of 3 and 5 and agreed to be individually interviewed for about 30 minutes.

The interview consisted of eight open-ended questions. The first four questions focus on children's play and the last two directly center on technology use. These interviewees completed a consent form but demographic information was not collected to maintain anonymity. Four interviews took place at the home of parent 5, one interview was done at the home of the first author and the remaining interview with parent 1 was done at the first author's office. A limitation of this study is that we did not collect information regarding the parents' level of education, income, life style, or culture.

Results of the Study

The themes that emerged from these data were as follows:

- commonalities in the traditional forms of play
- regular use of digital toys and tablets
- belief that limitations on technology use are necessary
- the belief in technology use for educational purposes

The researcher began by asking each parent to think of their preschool child between the ages of 3 and 5. Parents were asked eight open-ended questions. To start the interview, the researcher asked what parents considered as play. Four parents (parents 2, 4, 5, and 6) provided examples of traditional (non-technology) forms of play only while two parents (parents 1 and 3) gave activities that included both traditional forms of play and technology. The only technology play mentioned was the iPad. It is important to note that parent 1 explained her reasoning for how her preschooler plays. She stated, "We like play to be with objects and not all technology." She continued that they try to limit the technology because it is everywhere and her child is capable of accessing technology by himself.

Next, parents were asked to discuss the different ways they see their preschool child playing. Four parents (parents 1, 2, 4, and 6) only provided traditional forms of play in their explanation while the remaining two (parents 3 and 5) gave examples of both technology and traditional play, although just one of the latter two parents also listed technology and traditional play in the first question. Responses to this question overlapped somewhat with question one. As an example, parents responded with outdoor activities, playing pretend, and the iPad.

In question three, the researcher asked parents how much time their child played outdoors on a typical day, and what types of things they played (*see Table 1*). Five parents prefaced their answer by rationalizing the amount of time based on the weather. Of all the outdoor play discussed by the parents, the majority of activities required a large open space or an outside environment.

Following the discussion of outdoor play, parents were asked how much time their child played indoors and what types of things they played (*see Table 2*). The amount of time reported varied greatly among the interviewees. Likewise, some parents only mentioned traditional forms of play while another parent only listed electronic activities.

Interview Questions

1. What do you consider play?
2. Discuss the different ways you see your preschool child playing.
3. On a typical day, how much time do you estimate our child plays outdoors? What types of things does he/she play?
4. On a typical day, how much time does your child play indoors? What types of things does he/she play?
5. On a typical day, how much time does your child play with technology? What types of things does he/she play?
6. How should technology be used by a preschooler?
7. What are your preschooler's favorite things to do with technology?
8. Thinking about your preschooler, what are the advantages and disadvantages of technology?

For question 5, the researcher asked parents how much time their child played with technology and what types of things they played (*see Table 3*). The amount of time ranged from .25 hours to 2-4 hours. Each parent interviewed said that his/her child played with a tablet device, which was the most common technology activity.

After parents discussed how their child engaged in technology play, the researcher asked interviewees how they felt technology should be used by a preschooler. Parents 1 and 2 both said that technology should be limited and each indicated that it should be supervised or monitored. Five parents (parents 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) responded that technology is positive for reasons such as exposure, learning, and education. Parent 3 said she thinks that children should use technology to get used to a keyboard and because her child will use it in college and elementary school. She indicated that technology helps her child know where the letters are on the keyboard and the preschool utilizes an iPad and desktop computer. Parent 4 believes that the iPad "might be good for learning sequence of events" and that technology provided good learning tools. Additionally, parent 6 feels that technology is beneficial for education and gets children excited about learning.

Although parent 2 felt that technology should be used by a preschooler "for exposure and educational games," she felt that it should be used in moderation and in a limited way. This interviewee also felt that technology needs to be monitored. Similarly, parent 1 had concerns about the amount of technology used by her preschooler. She said that her child "gets crazy" if they say no and he "gets very engrossed." Further, with their second child, "technology was a lifesaver" to occupy their older son but, now that the younger child is older, they are trying to pull back technology and "limit it more" with their son.

Table 1: Interview Question: Outdoor Activities

Parent	Time Playing Outdoors	Outdoor Activities
1	1-1.5 hr/day	Ride on car
2	2 hr/day	Swing-set, dolls, bike riding, water toys, snow
3	2 hr/day	Riding bike, swing-set, slides, t-ball, swimming, waterpark
4	2 hr/day	Swings, scooter, big-wheel, sand, bike carrier, grocery
5	2 hr/day	Swing-set, sports, swimming, John Deere
6	2-3 hr/day	Riding bike, running, chalk, swings, Jeep, fishing

Table 2: Interview Question: Indoor Activities

Parent	Time Playing Indoors	Indoor Activities
1	(The rest of time)	Star Wars/Minecraft games, computer, PlayStation, iPad
2	4-6 hr/day	Pretend, kitchen, cooking, dolls, books, Legos
3	2-5 hr/day	Movies, puzzles, crayons, watercolor, flashcards, iPad
4	12 hr/day	Puzzles, Legos, kitchen, cleaning, laundry
5	3 hr/day	Basketball, board games, puzzles, books, math, technology
6	3 hr/day	Dolls, dress-up, doctor set, movies, cars, puzzles, LeapPad

Table 3: Interview Question: Technology Activities

Parent	Time Playing Technology	Technology Activities
1	1-1.5 hr/day	Netflix, TV, iPad, Minecraft, computer
2	2-4 hr/day	TV, Kindle
3	1 hr/day	Skype, digital toys, Z-Tech, LeapFrog, cell phone, iPad
4	.25 hr/day	iPad, alphabet toy
5	2.5 hr/day	iPad, Kindle, iPod, Xbox, cell phone, Wii, Raz-Kids
6	2 hr/day	Movies, iPad, LeapPad, cell phones

To understand which technology activities preschoolers enjoy the most, the researcher asked parents about their child's favorite things to do with technology. Tablet apps and electronic games were the most

popular activities in which all parents stated their child enjoyed these the most. (*See Table 4*)

The final interview questions asked parents to think about their child and explain what they feel were the advantages and disadvantages of technology. Five parents (parents 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) believed that technology use by their preschooler was beneficial for learning. Parent 5 stated, "Technology advances him." Parent 6 said that technology is advantageous because it provides "more learning when we don't have time," offers children more detail, and makes concepts easier for them to comprehend.

Aside from the learning aspect, interviewees also explained that technology will be useful to prepare their children for what to expect in school. Parent 1 commented that her child will be using more technology once he enters school and that "everything is more technology based." She added that a lot of classrooms use technology and her child is going to see it more, specifically emphasizing an increase in the availability and use of technology. She felt as though media was everywhere and stressed a "more, more, more" mentality as to the abundance, use, and dependence upon it. Parent 4 stated, "The whole world has technology so the more advanced, the better they'll be." and so they are not afraid of it. Overall, parent 4 felt that technology was beneficial to her child. Parent 5 explained that the advantage of technology is that her child "can use it all when he enters school." Further, she said that technology will help with testing since all of the tests are electronic now, and this parent believes that her child will be ahead of other kids in this sense.

All of the interviewees were able to identify disadvantages to technology use as well. Both parents 1 and 5, who have a preschool son, described a problem with breaking their child

Table 4: Interview Question: Favorite Technology

Parent	Favorite Technology Activities
1	Minecraft game, Netflix, educational/ Cartoon-based shows, Discovery channel
2	Looking at pictures on cell phones, Kindle ABC and 123 games
3	A-Z, counting, singing, Wheels on the Bus, Kids on the Bus, and Monkey apps
4	Five Little Monkeys and Mr. Potato Head apps
5	Xbox, iPod music, iPad apps, sports-based technology, Raz-Kids, Township app
6	Electronic books, iPad games, movies

Find the balance between traditional and technology play.

Courtesy of Westminster School for Young Children, Nashville, TN

away from technology. Parent 1 explained, "You need to focus and get in his face. It's hard to transition him away." Similarly, parent 5 said, "He's addicted to it. He craves technology." and gets obsessed. In addition to the addictive nature, parent 1 expressed concern about her child's eyes as did parent 5. Parent 1 also worries about her child sitting around and being inactive. She thinks that he is better focused when he gets out and exercises. Parent 3 also said that she wants her child "to be active and do other things and get exercise."

Furthermore, three parents (parents 2, 3, and 4) indicated that they felt technology could be time consuming and were concerned with the amount of time that their child spent on technology. Parents 1 and 2 were worried that technology limited social interaction. Parent 2 said technology caused a "lack of exposure to other learning things." Parent 4 said that a disadvantage of technology by her preschooler is that "There's stuff they could get into." She also told the researcher, "I'm not sure how much it stimulates imagination and creativity. I want them to play pretend." Lastly, parent 6 was concerned that his child was not really reading with electronic books, just listening. He added that with paper, meaning the traditional hardcopy format of a book, she was "trying to learn" how to read the words opposed to simply following along.

Results of the interviews reveal overlap in the types of activities in which children engage and parental beliefs about their children's play and technology use. A distinct role of technology emerged. Parents discussed its educational benefits and explained that their children played with technology for entertainment. Advantages of technology centered on learning and exposure to various media tools. Meanwhile, common disadvantages that surfaced were concerns about overuse, addiction, harm to the eyes, and inappropriate content. In most of the interviews, parents described a need for balance between technology and traditional play.

Discussion

In the interviews, parents were asked how much time their child spent playing with technology as well as outdoors. Most of the parents who were interviewed indicated that their child spent less time engaged with technology than playing outside. The majority (n=4) said that their child spent two hours per day outside. Parent interviews were completed at the beginning of June when temperatures were warm, providing more opportunity for outdoor play. Perhaps parents' responses reflected how they preferred to balance their preschoolers' activities. Several had mentioned that they felt the need to limit their child's time with technology and some discussed balancing traditional play with digital devices.

The last interview question asked what parents believed about technology use by their preschooler. In general, advantages centered

Parents should actively engage children, whether doing a science experiment or playing with technology

Courtesy of University of South Florida Preschool for Creative Learning

on exposure to or familiarity with mainstream media and how technology can be used as a tool to help children to learn. In light of the fact that technology is everywhere and has become the norm during children's play, many parents in this study had reservations about its use and some felt that technology should be limited. Parents should request when possible that children ask for permission to use technology. That will better allow parents to track how much time children are engaged with technology. Password locks are a good way to limit use and insure that they ask you first.

While parent 1 felt that it was an advantage for her son to be using the technology that will be employed at school, she also disclosed in the interview that her son "gets very engrossed" and "gets crazy" if they withhold technology from him. Similarly, parent 5 said that her son is "addicted to it," "craves technology," and "gets obsessed." The parents are suggesting that technology can have an addictive effect on a preschooler and this topic should be explored further in future research. We might consider what constitutes a craving for media and if gender, as only boys' parents mentioned this phenomenon, depends on whether or not a child becomes addicted to technology. Parents should balance the time their children spend on technology with other forms of recreation such as outdoor play, literacy experiences and non-technology play.

Parents 1 and 5 expressed concern that technology was not good for their children's eyes. Parent 4 felt that there may be inappropriate content and that technology could be overused. Above all, the most common concern among all of the parents in this study regarded setting limits on technology. They felt that their children should spend time engaging in other types of play and worried about the negative impact of technology: harm to the eyes, its addictive nature, and safety concerns regarding the content itself. Parents seemed to be conflicted about how much time quantifies an appropriate amount. Researchers like Wartella, Vandewater, and Rideout (2005) explain that very little is known about the impact of technology on children. Unfortunately, this may often result in a population of parents who lack the information to make data-driven decisions about what kind of limits are appropriate to place on their child's media use.

Parents worry about the negative impact of technology.

A prominent question then is how much technology should a preschooler use and to what capacity? Plowman (2013) found that parents thought a balance between play and technology was necessary, and Johnson and Christie (2009) noted the need for parents to balance media time and play. In the present study, the parents referred to a balance between technology and traditional forms of play but did not explicitly state a number that they felt represented too much technology. The role of technology, however, did emerge and seemed to be twofold based on the findings from this study. First, it served entertainment purposes. Examples of this include television and movies, tablet applications, computer games, video games, and electronic toys. Second, technology took the form of supplemental learning material. Parents reported that children were accessing educational games and learning on digital devices. Overall, parents indicated that their children like to use the apps and play games, and the parents emphasized that the format of the technology was educational. This coupling of fun and learning makes technology a crowd pleaser among all ages because digital devices keep the children's attention and provide new, exciting opportunities while parents feel as though their children are benefiting educationally. Parents can consider monitoring the types of apps children use to make sure they are appropriate. In addition, balancing out play apps with education apps will allow the child to use technology in more meaningful ways.

Conclusion

Parents indicated that their children enjoyed playing with technology. One stated that it was difficult to pull her child away from the device when he was playing. One may postulate that technology is so appealing because of the novelty factor. We conclude that there are new opportunities unveiled all the time and that is one of the driving causes of what makes children and adults alike so excited about technology. Portability is an added feature as it provides for convenience especially with busy lifestyles. However, it is not the format, the shape, or size of the gadget that makes it so popular. Rather, it is the capability of the device to provide new experiences for the user over successive interactions. This potential is what gives technology an important edge in education and it can become an important tool to supplement learning at any age. We encourage parents to spend time

playing with children when they are using technology as you would if you were engaging in any game. Scaffold learning where appropriate and use the educational apps as teachable moments.

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¿Debe Ser la Tecnología una Preocupación para los Padres de Niños de Edad Preescolar?

El juego tradicional y el juego de la tecnología son dos maneras en que los niños juegan hoy. Los padres luchan con la cantidad de tiempo asignado para jugar con la tecnología porque sus hijos la quieren a menudo. Este artículo proporciona ideas de un estudio centrado en si la tecnología debe de ser una preocupación para los padres y las percepciones de los padres sobre el juego de los niños.

Lori DeShelter & Ruslan Slutsky

Debido a la afluencia de nuevas tecnologías, los niños de hoy tienen más opciones que nunca en la forma en que se involucran en el juego a través de la tecnología. Computadoras, tabletas, videojuegos de mano y teléfonos celulares de los padres son numerosos entre las tecnologías que afectan a el juego de los niños sobre todo al aire libre. Los niños están optando por jugar con tecnología mucho más fácilmente que con otras formas de juego, como se indica en el siguiente escenario:

> *Mi hijo está pegado a su tableta electrónica. Quiere jugar con esa tableta todo el tiempo. Cuando se le dice que no puede usarlo, a menudo le escucho decir, "Estoy aburrido". Sugiero que lea un libro o que juegue al aire libre, pero esas opciones no son populares ya que solo hay unos cuantos niños en nuestro vecindario. Muchos de ellos pasan el tiempo jugando adentro. Unos minutos más tarde se le oye decir otra vez, "Estoy aburrido, ¿puedo ver la televisión?" Ofrezco otras sugerencias, pero ninguna parece ayudar. El quiere jugar con su tableta para descargar alguna app o aplicación que ha descubierto. Aunque mi hijo tiene 9 años este comportamiento ha sido frecuente incluso desde cuando estaba en preescolar. He tratado de limitar su juego con la tecnología, pero frecuentemente lo encuentro a escondidas jugando en su habitación cuando no debe. El encanto de la tecnología se ha vuelto tan grande que es la primera selección cuando el tiempo de juego es una opción.*

El escenario anterior es probablemente algo que muchos padres (como muchos de nosotros) se pueden relacionarse bien. Ellos luchan con la cantidad de tiempo que asignan a sus hijos para el juego con la tecnología, y a menudo se preguntan: "¿Cómo manejamos la tecnología? ¿Deberíamos de manejar la tecnología?" Esas son las preguntas con las que luchamos cuando tratamos de equilibrar los tipos de experiencias de desarrollo y de aprendizaje que queremos que nuestros hijos tengan a medida que crecen. En este artículo se discuten las percepciones de los padres de cómo juegan los niños y el uso de la tecnología de sus hijos. Es importante señalar que definimos el juego tradicionalmente que incluyen las interacciones con personas y objetos que no son de naturaleza tecnológica. Además, se define el juego tecnológico como cualquier forma de juego que incluye la tecnología.

Los Padres y Tecnología

Los padres son responsables de brindar a los niños oportunidades de jugar y de estar expuestos a la tecnología como mejor les parezca. El acceso al uso de la tecnología en el hogar puede depender en gran medida de la educación de los padres, el estilo de vida, la práctica cultural y los ingresos familiares, las creencias de los padres, los estilos de vida y el uso personal (de la tecnología). Hemos descubierto que aparte de la edad de los niños, los padres son un factor que contribuye al uso de los medios de comunicación (Slutsky y DeShetler, 2016). Es comprensible que los padres actúen como proveedores y por lo tanto impactan directamente en la disponibilidad y el uso de la tecnología en el hogar.

Un punto de vista a considerar es la posible relación entre el uso de los medios de comunicación infantil y la educación de los padres. Anand y Krosnick (2005) examinaron si la educación de la madre y el padre tenía un impacto en la tecnología en la cual los niños se involucraron. Los investigadores descubrieron que los niños de madres y padres con menos educación veían más televisión. Los hijos de padres que tenían alguna educación

universitaria o que se graduaron de la universidad pasaron más tiempo en las computadoras que aquellos cuyos padres tenían el nivel más bajo de educación. Por lo tanto, la educación de los padres puede ser un catalizador en la predicción de algunos aspectos del uso de la tecnología de los niños. Anand y Krosnick explican que deben examinarse otros factores como los valores de los padres: "Los valores que los padres más educados aportan a la crianza de los hijos los llevan a desalentar el ver la televisión y abogar más por otras actividades." (p.557)

Para los padres, la tecnología puede servir en la capacidad de una niñera en el hogar (Plowman, 2013). Plowman aborda el estilo de vida de los padres de hoy comentando que la tecnología es una alternativa atractiva debido al agotamiento causado por el trabajo. La tecnología sirve en este papel para ocupar el tiempo del niño mientras que a los padres se les brinda la oportunidad de hacer otra cosa. Plowman (2013) informa que mientras que la tecnología parece tener varias facetas de valor, los padres también sienten que es necesario un equilibrio entre el juego tradicional (no tecnológico) y el uso de la tecnología. Esto sugiere que los padres pueden todavía poner la importancia en el juego más tradicional como juego creativo, dramático y constructivo.

Shiakou y Belsky (2013) realizaron investigaciones sobre las actitudes de los padres hacia el juego de los niños. Los investigadores realizaron un estudio de 142 padres Griegos/Chipriotas y de niños entre las edades de 4 y 7 años que estaban matriculados en preescolar. La información demográfica recogida incluía la edad, la educación, los ingresos y las horas de trabajo de los padres. Los investigadores revisaron estudios previos sobre las percepciones de los padres sobre los programas educativos de los niños y sus creencias sobre el juego. A través de este proceso y en la recopilación de datos de su estudio, surgió un tema general. Descubrieron que las diferencias de los padres estaban arraigadas en la práctica cultural y como resultado, las creencias de los padres afectaron la forma en que los niños jugaban. Según los investigadores, "las actitudes de los padres hacia el juego y el aprendizaje difieren dentro ... de las culturas, y que las prácticas parentales utilizadas para alentar académicamente a los niños y el tiempo asignado o abandonado para jugar también difieren entre las culturas." (p. 21)

Los antecedentes de los padres ayudan a determinar el uso de los medios de comunicación de los niños.

Hofferth (2010) examinó el uso, el logro y el comportamiento de la tecnología del hogar de los niños y la relación con la participación de los padres. El estudio consistió en niños entre las edades de 6 y 12 años que vivían con sus madres. Se pidió a los participantes que registraran las actividades del niño durante un período de 24 horas. Hofferth (2010) descubrió que el uso de la tecnología dependía de los atributos como la educación de los padres y del ingreso familiar. Además, la dependencia de los hijos en sus padres crea un sistema de control en el que las características de los padres determinan el uso de los medios de comunicación de los niños. Por lo tanto, factores como la educación de los padres, el estilo de vida, la cultura y los ingresos juegan un papel importante en la disponibilidad y el uso de la tecnología en el hogar. En este estudio, los investigadores querían entender las percepciones de los padres sobre el juego de sus hijos y el uso de la tecnología.

¿Debe limitarse el uso de la tecnología?

Algunos padres creen que la tecnología debe ser usada con moderación (Slutsky y DeShetler, 2016). Los padres llevan un cierto conjunto de creencias que afectan la forma en que su hijo juega y se relaciona con la tecnología, y estas percepciones también determinan si sienten la necesidad de establecer límites. En la actualidad, hay poca información disponible para guiar a los padres en la determinación de qué tipo de límites deben ponerse en el uso de la tecnología, especialmente en la edad preescolar (Hofferth, 2010; Neumann, 2015). Según Hofferth (2010), existen pocos estudios sobre el uso de la tecnología infantil que comparen grupos similares de niños o dividen datos por edad. Con el fin de establecer pautas para ayudar a los padres en la fijación de límites, se necesita investigaciones que examine el contexto de uso: Cómo los preescolares utilizan la tecnología como las tabletas y por qué razones la utilizan (Neumann, 2015). Wiles, Schachtner y Pentz (2016) sostienen que los niños pequeños se benefician más de la interacción humana y que los padres que permiten cualquier tiempo en la pantalla "deben hacer todo lo que esté en su poder para participar en el tiempo de la pantalla con sus hijos en formas activas." (p.1)

Independientemente de la experiencia, los dispositivos digitales

han entrado en la imagen y son un elemento destacado en la vida cotidiana de los niños. Antes de que podamos entender cómo la tecnología afecta el desarrollo de los niños en edad preescolar, más investigaciones se justifican ya que parece haber una brecha para delinear las actividades de los niños y lo que los padres atribuyen a su razonamiento para promover o rechazar el uso de la tecnología en el hogar. Es importante destacar no sólo las creencias de los padres que afectan la cantidad y tipo de tecnología utilizada en el hogar, sino también cómo las decisiones pueden haber surgido de la práctica cultural y experiencias personales.

El Estudio

Nuestro estudio se centró en si la tecnología debe ser una preocupación para los padres, específicamente, queríamos aprender acerca de los padres los pensamientos y creencias sobre el juego de sus hijos y el uso de la tecnología. Los investigadores se centraron en:

- la percepción de los padres sobre lo que consideraban que era el juego
- las diferentes formas en que jugaban sus hijos
- la frecuencia con que jugaban en el interior y al aire libre
- cuánto tiempo participaban en el juego de la tecnología.

Un total de seis padres (cinco mujeres, un varón) fueron reclutados para participar en entrevistas abiertas, centrándose en el juego de sus hijos. Los seis padres tenían un niño de edad preescolar entre la edad de tres y cinco años y acordaron a ser entrevistados individualmente por aproximadamente 30 minutos.

La entrevista consistió en ocho preguntas abiertas. Las cuatro primeras preguntas se centran en el juego de los niños y las dos últimas se centran directamente en el uso de la tecnología. Estos entrevistados completaron un formulario de consentimiento, pero la información demográfica no fue recogida para mantener el anonimato. Cuatro entrevistas tuvieron lugar en la casa del padre 5, una entrevista se realizó en la casa del primer autor y la otra con el padre 1 se realizó en la oficina del primer autor. Una limitación de este estudio fue que no recopilamos información sobre el nivel de educación, ingreso, estilo de vida o cultura de los padres.

Preguntas de Entrevista

1. ¿Qué considera jugar?
2. Discute las diferentes maneras en que ves a tu niño preescolar jugar.
3. En un día típico, ¿cuánto tiempo estimas que tu hijo juega al aire libre? ¿Con qué tipo de cosas juega?
4. En un día típico, ¿cuánto tiempo hace su niño jugar adentro? ¿Con qué tipos de cosas juega?
5. En un día típico, ¿cuánto tiempo juega su niño con la tecnología? ¿Con qué tipos de cosas juega él / ella?
6. ¿Cómo debe ser utilizada la tecnología por un niño de edad preescolar?
7. ¿Cuáles son las cosas favoritas de su preescolar que hacer con la tecnología?
8. Pensando en su preescolar, ¿cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de la tecnología?

Resultados

Los temas que surgieron de los datos de la investigación fueron los siguientes: puntos comunes en las formas tradicionales de juego; uso regular de juguetes y tabletas digitales; la creencia de que las limitaciones en el uso de la tecnología son necesarias; y la creencia en el uso de la tecnología con fines educativos. El investigador comenzó pidiendo a cada padre que pensara en su hijo preescolar entre las edades de tres y cinco años. A los padres se les hicieron ocho preguntas abiertas. Para iniciar la entrevista, el investigador preguntó qué consideraban los padres como juego. Cuatro padres (padres 2, 4, 5 y 6) proporcionaron ejemplos de formas de juego tradicionales (no tecnológicas) mientras que dos padres (madres 1 y 3) daban actividades que incluían formas tradicionales de juego y tecnología. El único juego de tecnología mencionado fue el iPad. Es importante notar que la madre 1 explicó su razonamiento de cómo juega su niño de edad preescolar. Ella dijo, "Nos gusta jugar con objetos y no toda la tecnología." Ella dijo que tratan de limitar la tecnología porque está en

todas partes y su hijo es capaz de acceder a la tecnología por sí mismo.

A continuación, se les pidió a los padres que discutieran las diferentes maneras en que ven jugar a sus hijos de edad preescolar. Cuatro padres (padres 1, 2, 4 y 6) sólo proporcionaron formas tradicionales de juego en su explicación, mientras que los otros dos (madres 3 y 5) dieron ejemplos tanto de tecnología como de juego tradicional, aunque sólo uno de estos dos últimos padres incluyó la tecnología y el juego tradicional en la primera pregunta. Las respuestas a esta pregunta se superponían un poco con la primera pregunta. Como ejemplo, los padres respondieron con actividades al aire libre, jugando a pretender, y el iPad. En la pregunta tres, el investigador preguntó a los padres cuánto tiempo su hijo jugaba al aire libre en un día típico, y con qué tipo de cosas jugaban (véase la Tabla 1). Cinco padres prefaciaron su respuesta racionalizando la cantidad de tiempo basada en el clima. De todo el juego al aire libre discutido por los padres, la mayoría de las actividades requerían un gran espacio abierto o un ambiente exterior.

Después de la discusión del juego al aire libre, a los padres se les preguntó cuánto tiempo su niño jugó adentro y con qué tipo de cosas jugaron (véase la Tabla 2). La cantidad de tiempo reportado varió mucho entre los entrevistados. Del mismo modo, algunos padres sólo mencionaron las formas tradicionales de juego, mientras que otro padre sólo enumeró las actividades electrónicas.

Para la pregunta 5, el investigador preguntó a los padres cuánto tiempo su hijo jugaba con la tecnología y con qué tipo de cosas jugaban (véase la Tabla 3). La cantidad de tiempo varió de 0.25 horas a 2-4 horas.

Tabla 1: Pregunta de la entrevista: Actividades al aire libre

Padre	Tiempo para jugar al aire libre	Actividades al aire libre
1	1-1.5 horas por día	Paseo en coche
2	2 hora por día	Columpios, muñecas, montar en bicicleta, juguetes acuáticos, nieve
3	2 hora por día	Montar en bicicleta, columpios, toboganes, t-ball, natación, parque acuático
4	2 hora por día	Columpios, patín, rueda grande, arena, portabicicletas, supermercado
5	2 hora por día	Columpios, deportes, natación, John Deere
6	2-3 hora por día	Montar en bicicleta, correr, tiza, columpios, Jeep, pesca

Tabla 2: Preguntas de la entrevista: Actividades en el interior

Padre	Tiempo jugando en el interior	Actividades en el interior
1	(El resto del tiempo)	Juegos de Star Wars / Minecraft, computadora, PlayStation, iPad
2	4-6 hora por día	Pretender, cocina, muñecas, libros, Legos
3	2-5 hora por día	Películas, rompecabezas, crayones, acuarela, tarjetas didácticas, iPad
4	12 hora por día	Rompecabezas, Legos, cocina, limpieza, lavandería
5	3 hora por día	Baloncesto, juegos de mesa, rompecabezas, libros, matemáticas, tecnología
6	3 hora por día	Muñecas, disfrazarse, conjunto médico, películas, coches, rompecabezas, LeapPad

Tabla 3: Pregunta de la entrevista: Actividades de tecnología

Padre	Tiempo que juega la tecnología	Actividades Tecnológicas
1	1-1.5 hora por día	Netflix, TV, iPad, Minecraft, computadora
2	2-4 hora por día	TV, Kindle
3	1 hora por día	Skype, juguetes digitales, Z-Tech, LeapFrog, teléfono celular, iPad
4	.25 hora por día	iPad, juguete del alfabeto
5	2.5 hora por día	iPad, Kindle, iPod, Xbox, teléfono celular, Wii, Raz-Kids
6	2 hora por día	Películas, iPad, LeapPad, teléfono celular.

Cada padre entrevistado dijo que su hijo jugaba con un dispositivo de tableta, que era la actividad tecnológica más común.

Después de que los padres discutieron cómo su hijo participaba en el juego de tecnología, el investigador preguntó a los entrevistados cómo sentían que la tecnología debía ser usada por un niño de edad preescolar. Las madres 1 y 2 dijeron que la tecnología debería ser limitada y cada una indicó que debería ser supervisado o monitoreado. Cinco padres (padres 2, 3, 4, 5 y 6) respondieron que la tecnología es positiva por razones tales como exposición, aprendizaje y educación. La madre 3 dijo que piensa que los niños deben usar la tecnología para acostumbrarse a un teclado y porque su hijo lo usará en la escuela primaria y en la universidad. Indicó que la tecnología ayuda a su hijo a saber dónde están las letras en el teclado y que en el preescolar utiliza un iPad y una computadora de escritorio. La madre 4 cree que el iPad "podría ser bueno para el aprendizaje de la secuencia de eventos" y que la tecnología proporcionó buenas herramientas de aprendizaje. Además, el padre 6 siente que la tecnología es beneficiosa para la educación y que los niños se entusiasman con el aprendizaje.

Aunque la madre 2 sentía que la tecnología debía ser usada por un niño en edad preescolar "para exposición y juegos educativos," ella sentía que debía usarse con moderación y de manera limitada. Esta madre también consideró que la tecnología necesita ser monitoreada. Del mismo modo, la madre 1 tenía preocupaciones sobre la cantidad de tecnología utilizada por su preescolar. Ella dijo que su hijo "se vuelve loco" si dicen que no y que también él "se pone muy absorto." Además,

Tabla 4: Pregunta de la entrevista: Tecnología favorita

Padre	Actividades tecnológicas favoritas
1	Juego de Minecraft, Netflix, caricaturas educacionales, canal Discovery
2	Ver fotografías en el teléfono celular, juego en Kindle de ABC y 123
3	A-Z, contar, cantar, Las Ruedas del Camión, Los Niños en el Camión, y applicaciones o apps de Monkey
4	Cinco Changuitos y Señor Cabeza de Papa o Mr. Potato Head apps
5	Xbox, música de iPod, iPad apps o aplicaciones, Tecnología Deportiva, programa de lectura Raz-Kids, app de Township
6	Libros electrónicos, juegos para el iPad, películas

Encuentre el equilibrio entre juego tradicional y tecnología.

Cortesía de la Escuela Westminster para Niños Pequeños, Nashville, TN

con su segundo hijo, "la tecnología era un salvavidas" para ocupar a su hijo mayor; pero ahora que el niño más joven es mayor, están tratando de retirar la tecnología y "limitarla más" con su hijo.

Para entender qué actividades tecnológicas disfrutan más los preescolares, el investigador preguntó a los padres sobre las cosas favoritas de su hijo para hacer con la tecnología. Las aplicaciones de la tableta y los juegos electrónicos eran las actividades más populares en las cuales todos los padres declararon que su niño disfrutó de éstos más. Véase la Tabla 4.

Las preguntas finales de la entrevista pidieron a los padres que pensaran acerca de su hijo y explicaran lo que consideraban las ventajas y desventajas de la tecnología. Cinco padres (padres 2, 3, 4, 5 y 6) creían que el uso de la tecnología por parte de su hijo de edad preescolar era beneficioso para el aprendizaje. Padre 6 dijo que la tecnología es ventajosa porque proporciona "más aprendizaje cuando no tenemos tiempo," ofrece a los niños más detalles y hace que los conceptos sean más fáciles de comprender.

Aparte del aspecto del aprendizaje, los entrevistados también explicaron que la tecnología será útil para preparar a sus hijos para saber qué esperar en la escuela. La madre 1 comentó que su hijo utilizará más tecnología una vez que entre a la escuela y que "todo está más basado en tecnología." Agregó que muchas aulas utilizan la tecnología y su hijo va a verla más, enfatizando específicamente un aumento en la disponibilidad y el uso de la tecnología. Ella pensaba que los medios de comunicación se encuentran en todas partes y enfatizaba que existe una mentalidad de tener "más, más, más" en cuanto a la abundancia, el uso y la dependencia de la tecnología. La madre 4 declaró, "El mundo entero tiene tecnología, así que cuanto más avanzados, mejores serán" y por lo tanto no tienen miedo de ello. En general, la madre 4 consideró que la tecnología era beneficiosa para su hijo. La madre 5 explicó que la ventaja de la tecnología que tiene su hijo es que "puede usarlo todo cuando entre en la escuela." Además, dijo que la tecnología ayudará con las pruebas ya que todas las pruebas son electrónicas ahora, y este padre cree que su hijo va a estar más adelantado de otros niños en este sentido.

Todos los entrevistados fueron capaces de identificar las desventajas del uso de la tecnología también. Tanto las madres 1 y 5, que tienen un hijo preescolar, describieron el problema de quitar a su hijo de la tecnología. La madre 1 explicó, "Tienes que enfocarte y meterte en la cara. Es difícil cambiarlo." De manera similar, la madre 5 dijo, "El es adicto a ella. Ansía la tecnología y se obsesiona." Además de la naturaleza adictiva, la madre 1 expresó su preocupación por los ojos de su hijo como lo hizo la madre 5. La madre 1 también se preocupa de que su hijo se sienta y esté inactivo. Ella piensa que él está mejor enfocado cuando

Los padres deben involucrar activamente a los niños, ya sea haciendo un experimento científico o jugando con la tecnología.

Cortesía de la Universidad del Sur de la Florida Preescolar para el Aprendizaje Creativo

sale y hace ejercicio. La madre 3 también dijo que ella quiere que su hijo "sea activo y haga otras cosas y haga ejercicios."

Además, tres madres (padres 2, 3 y 4) indicaron que sentían que la tecnología podía consumir mucho tiempo y estaban preocupados por la cantidad de tiempo que su hijo pasaba en tecnología. Las madres 1 y 2 estaban preocupados porque la tecnología limitaba la interacción social. La madre 2 dijo que la tecnología causó una "falta de exposición a otras cosas de aprendizaje." La madre 4 dijo que una desventaja de la tecnología para su niño de edad preescolar es que "hay cosas en las que podrían entrar" (refiriéndose al Internet). Ella también le dijo al investigador, "No estoy segura de cuánto estimula la imaginación y la creatividad. Quiero que jueguen a pretender." Por último, a los padres les preocupaba que su hijo no estuviera realmente leyendo con libros electrónicos, solo escuchando. Añadieron que con el papel, que significa el formato impreso tradicional de un libro, estaba "tratando de aprender" cómo leer las palabras en vez de simplemente seguir adelante.

Los resultados de las entrevistas revelan la superposición en los tipos de actividades en las que los niños se involucran y las creencias de los padres sobre el juego de sus hijos y el uso de la tecnología. Un rol distinto de la tecnología surgió. Los padres discutieron sus beneficios educativos y explicaron que sus hijos jugaban con la tecnología para el entretenimiento. Las ventajas de la tecnología se centraron en el aprendizaje y la exposición a diversas herramientas de los medios de comunicación. Mientras tanto, las desventajas comunes que surgieron fueron las preocupaciones por el uso excesivo, la adicción, el daño a los ojos y el contenido inapropiado. En la mayoría de las entrevistas, los padres describieron la necesidad de un equilibrio entre la tecnología y el juego tradicional.

Los padres se preocupan por el impacto negativo de la tecnología.

Discusión

En las entrevistas, a los padres se les preguntó cuánto tiempo su hijo pasó jugando con la tecnología, así como al aire libre. La mayoría de los padres entrevistados indicaron que su hijo pasaba menos tiempo dedicado a la tecnología que jugar al aire libre. La mayoría (n = 4) dijo que su hijo pasaba dos horas al día jugando afuera. Las entrevistas con los padres se completaron a principios de junio cuando las temperaturas eran cálidas, proporcionando más oportunidades para el juego al aire libre. Quizás las respuestas de los padres reflejaron cómo preferían equilibrar las actividades de sus preescolares. Varios habían mencionado que sentían la necesidad de limitar el tiempo de su niño con la tecnología y algunos discutieron balancear el juego tradicional con los dispositivos digitales.

La pregunta de la última entrevista era qué creían los padres sobre el uso de la tecnología por parte de su niño en edad preescolar. En general, las ventajas se centran en la exposición o familiaridad con los medios de comunicación y cómo la tecnología puede ser utilizada como una herramienta para ayudar a los niños a aprender. A la luz del hecho de que la tecnología está en todas partes y se ha convertido en la norma durante el juego infantil, muchos padres en este estudio tenían reservas sobre su uso y algunos creían que la tecnología debía de ser limitada. Los padres deben solicitar cuando sea posible que los niños pidan permiso para usar la tecnología. Eso permitirá a los padres controlar mejor cuánto tiempo dedican los niños a la tecnología. Las cerraduras de contraseña son una buena manera de limitar el uso y asegurarse de que le pregunten primero.

Mientras la madre 1 sentía que era una ventaja para su hijo estar usando la tecnología que se empleará en la escuela, también reveló en la entrevista que su hijo "se pone muy absorto" y "se vuelve loco" si se le impide la tecnología. Los padres sugieren que la tecnología puede tener un efecto adictivo en un niño de edad preescolar y este tema debe ser explorado más adelante en la investigación futura. Podríamos considerar lo que constituye un anhelo por los medios de comunicación y si el género, como sólo los padres de los niños mencionan este fenómeno, depende de si un niño se vuelve adicto a la tecnología. Los padres deben equilibrar el tiempo que sus hijos pasan en tecnología con otras formas de recreación, tales como juegos al aire libre, experiencias de alfabetización y juegos no tecnológicos.

Las madres 1 y 5 expresaron su preocupación porque la tecnología no era buena para los ojos de sus hijos. La madre 4 consideró que puede haber contenido inapropiado y que la tecnología podría ser usada en exceso. Sobre todo, la preocupación más común entre todos los padres en este estudio consideró el establecimiento de límites en la tecnología. Ellos sentían que sus hijos debían dedicar tiempo a otros tipos de juego y preocupados por el impacto

negativo de la tecnología: daño a los ojos, su naturaleza adictiva y preocupaciones de seguridad con respecto al contenido en sí. Los padres parecían estar en conflicto acerca de cuánto tiempo cuantifica una cantidad apropiada. Investigadores como Wartella, Vandewater y Rideout (2005) explican que se sabe muy poco sobre el impacto de la tecnología en los niños. Desafortunadamente, esto a menudo puede resultar en una población de padres que carecen de información para tomar decisiones basadas en datos sobre qué tipo de límites son apropiados para colocar en el uso de los medios de sus hijos.

Una pregunta importante entonces es ¿cuánta tecnología debe usar un niño en edad preescolar y a qué capacidad? Plowman (2013) encontró que los padres pensaban que era necesario un equilibrio entre juego y tecnología, y Johnson y Christie (2009) señalaron la necesidad de que los padres equilibraran el tiempo y el juego de los medios de comunicación. En el presente estudio, los padres se refirieron a un equilibrio entre la tecnología y las formas tradicionales de juego, pero no declararon explícitamente un número que se consideraba que representaba demasiada tecnología. El papel de la tecnología, sin embargo, surgió y parecía ser doble basado en los resultados de este estudio. Primero, sirvió propósitos de entretenimiento. Ejemplos de esto incluyen televisión y películas, aplicaciones de tabletas, juegos de computadora, videojuegos y juguetes electrónicos. En segundo lugar, la tecnología tomó la forma de material de aprendizaje suplementario. Los padres informaron que los niños estaban accediendo a juegos educativos y aprendían en dispositivos digitales. En general, los padres indicaron que a sus hijos les gusta usar las aplicaciones y jugar, y los padres enfatizaron que el formato de la tecnología era educativo. Este acoplamiento de la diversión y de aprender hace a la tecnología algo favorito entre todas las edades porque los dispositivos digitales guardan la atención de los niños y proporcionan oportunidades nuevas, emocionantes mientras que los padres se sienten como si sus niños se están beneficiando de manera educativa. Los padres pueden considerar el monitoreo de los tipos de aplicaciones que usan los niños para asegurarse de que son apropiados. Además, equilibrar las aplicaciones de juego con aplicaciones de educación le permitirá al niño utilizar la tecnología de manera más significativa.

Conclusión

Los padres indicaron que a sus hijos les gustaba jugar con la tecnología. Uno dijo que era difícil sacar a su hijo del dispositivo cuando estaba jugando. Uno puede postular que la tecnología es tan atractiva debido al factor de la novedad. Llegamos a la conclusión de que hay nuevas oportunidades desveladas todo el tiempo y que es una de las causas principales de lo que hace que tanto los niños como los adultos estén tan entusiasmados con la tecnología. La portabilidad es una característica añadida ya que proporciona comodidad especialmente con estilos de vida ocupados. Sin embargo, no es el formato, la forma o el tamaño del gadget lo que lo hace tan popular. Más bien, es la capacidad del dispositivo para proporcionar nuevas experiencias para el usuario sobre sucesivas interacciones. Este potencial es lo que da a la tecnología una ventaja importante en la educación y puede convertirse en una herramienta importante para complementar el aprendizaje a cualquier edad. Animamos a los padres a pasar tiempo jugando con los niños cuando usan la tecnología como lo harían si estuvieran participando en cualquier juego. Además debe de haber un andamio de aprendizaje donde sea apropiado y se deben de utilizar las aplicaciones educativas como momentos de enseñanza.

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President's Message, continued

We congratulate these programs for their commendable work and build on their efforts with the article; ***Meeting National Expectations for Partnering with Families,*** featured in this edition of ***Dimensions***.

The Editorial Committee has also selected the following articles to highlight varied perspectives on current research and best practices in the field of early care and education:

1. Questions and concerns regarding the use of technology by young children continue to beleaguer parents and early childhood educators. In the article '***Should Technology Be a Concern for Parents of Preschoolers?***', the authors discuss different perspectives on the topic.
2. In "***Opening a Window to Foster Children's Self-Confidence through Creative Art Activities***", the author proposes the 'why and how' art intervention programs enhance young children's self-confidence levels.
3. The authors of "***Use of Child Centered Play Therapy Responses in a Child Care Setting***" present their findings on how play therapy can be beneficial to foster positive relationships between very young children and their caregivers.

Please sit down, relax, and enjoy reading this excellent edition!

Sincerely,

Carol C. Montealegre

President

The SECA Reporter
Becomes a BLOG!

The summer 2015 issue of *The SECA Reporter* will be the last in the form of a newsletter. With the advance of technology, there are new ways to provide information that enhance the member experience and provide for interactive communication among our members throughout the SECA states. We'll continue to produce our e-newsletters such as *The Leadership Letter* and *Public Policy Notes*, but we think that changing *The SECA Reporter* to another information format will allow us to keep you updated more frequently and provide another avenue for you to participate professionally. ***The SECA Reporter* will now come to you in the form of a BLOG post** with a new post at least once a month.

During the last couple of years, we've moved from "print and mail" to 24 hour on-line access and in the process have increased the resources and content that we can provide. You can now go on-line and access your copy of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, the e-mail archives, public policy information and other resources anytime it fits your schedule. You no longer have to wait for these resources to appear in your mailbox.

We're looking for innovative and creative ways to serve you better and to provide member value. You've probably noticed the change in the way the monthly member e-mail looks. That's just one of the changes that we've initiated to make our member resources more relevant and useful.

You'll receive notification when the posts are made and we hope you'll share your thoughts and ideas with your colleagues. *Let us know what you think about this new adventure at SECA!*

The Board and Staff of the Southern Early Childhood Association

To Our Home Visiting Colleagues

On July 1, 2016, the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) began offering a membership that is designed especially for our home visiting colleagues. We want to share the wonderful resources and member benefits that we provide to our early childhood professional colleagues every day.

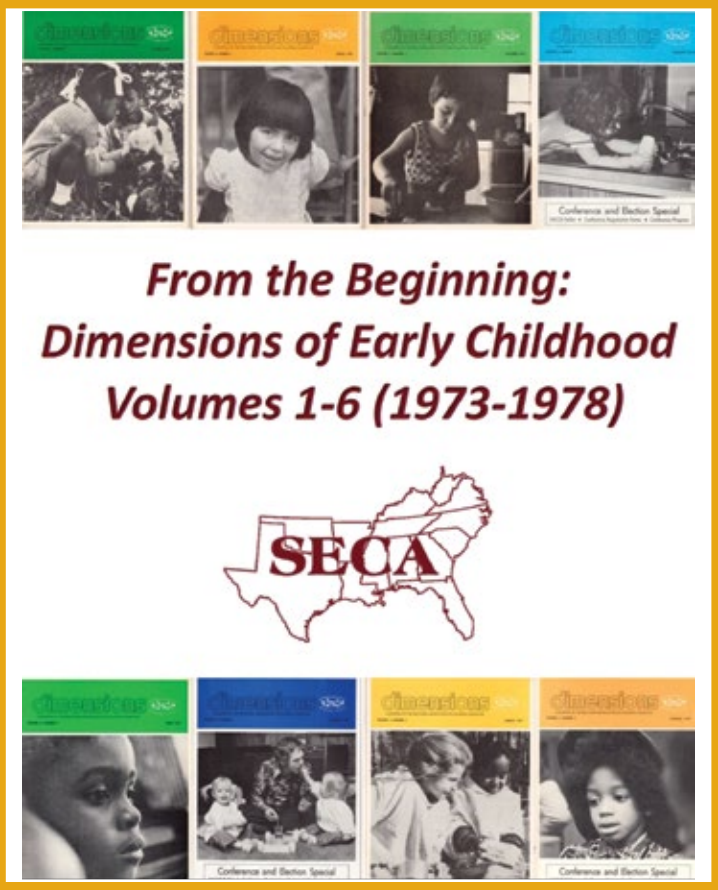
The Home Visiting Membership will include:

- *Dimensions of Early Childhood* for Home Visitors: Selected articles from our refereed journal, Dimensions of Early Childhood…6 issues per year
- *Dimensions Extra* for Home Visitors: Additional resources to support professional development and parent education on the topic of the article from Dimensions of Early Childhood for Home Visitors….6 issues per year
- A Specialized Page on the SECA website that will be devoted to issues of interest to home visitors and a blog platform that will allow members to interact with colleagues from throughout the region and nation
- Member discounts on attendance at the annual SECA conference with specialized content for home visitors and SECA publications and resources.

This limited membership will be available for only $30 per year; however, for just a few dollars more, you can join your state association and enjoy the full benefits of SECA and state membership.

For more information, contact info@ southernearlychildhood.org or give us a call at 1-800-305-SECA (7322)

A Rich History ..
Dimensions of Early Childhood
Celebrates 45 Years!



With the first issue in March 1973, the Southern Early Childhood Association (then the Southern Association on Children Under Six) began a journey to document the history of early childhood education in the South and to provide professional resources for the caregivers who were involved in that journey.

We're pleased to announce that we now have available indexes for all issues of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* from Volume 1 (March 1973) through Volume 44 (2016) available on our website at http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/page.php?purl=dimensions. You'll find:

- A compilation, ***From the Beginning: Dimensions of Early Childhood, Volumes 1-6*** . These volumes didn't have published indexes so we put them together in one document.
- Copies of the published indexes for all journals beginning with Volume 7.

If you're interested in the history of the field and how practice may have changed over the years, you'll find some interesting reading in these old issues. Not only has practice changed but you'll find a significant difference in the terminology we use in our everyday programs. SECA will maintain a permanent library of each issue, and we're delighted to be able to share with our members and colleagues. Just let us know if you'd like a copy of an article by contacting us at info@southernearlychildhood.org or 1-800-305-SECA.

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69th Annual Conference

Every Child Needs a Champion!

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