Holistic Child Development through the Early Years

A Resource for Trainers delivering Early Child Play Workshops
ABOUT RIGHT TO PLAY

Right To Play is a global organization, using the transformative power of play to educate and empower children facing adversity. Through playing sports and games, Right To Play helps over one million children learn through play to create better futures, while operating in more than 20 countries each week. Founded in 2000 by social entrepreneur and four-time Olympic gold medalist Johann Olav Koss, Right To Play is headquartered in Toronto, Canada and has national fundraising offices in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Regional offices are in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Our programs are facilitated by more than 600 international staff and 14,400 local volunteer Coaches.

About the Right To Play Resources

Right To Play has over 1,000 sport and play-based games and activities designed by child development experts in consultation with local stakeholders from the communities we serve. These games and activities are collected in resource manuals. All Right To Play resources and play- and sports-based learning activities use the 3-step teaching and learning methodology called RCA (Reflect-Connect-Apply). RCA helps students process their experiences through reflection and dialogue with their peers and others. Reflect-Connect-Apply allows students individually and in groups, to examine their experiences consciously, relate those experiences to what they already know and formulate plans to use their learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Right To Play wishes to acknowledge and thank you, a Right To Play Trainer, for committing to be one of our very important team members. We hope that this complimentary Resource will assist you in your fine efforts.

Also, we wish to acknowledge and thank all who contributed to the development of this Manual and others related to it:

- Teresa Gonzalez, Right To Play Director of Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation and other administrators of Right To Play who provided strong impetus, leadership and support for the project
- Joan Littleford, Lead Writer from the Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario, who captained the undertaking with extraordinary dedication, skill and attention to detail
- Jules Porter, Right To Play’s Supervisor of Training and Resource Development, who provided essential guidance throughout
- Elspeth Hannan, External Consultant, who revised this October 2009 version
- Jennifer Purdy, Right To Play Program Coordinator, who assisted with the textual framework and design and prepared the manuscript for publication

*Early Child Play Activities, Thailand*
This *Holistic Child Development through the Early Years* Resource is made up of two parts:

1. The first part is organized into valuable background information about Early Childhood Development. This resource is meant to complement, not replace, the Early Child Play Leader and Trainer Manuals. The topics this introduction addresses include:
   - Exploring Healthy Child Development
   - The Importance of Play
   - Principles of Child Development

2. The second part is an assessment tool that is intended for use at the leader level for measuring the success of the Early Child Play program. The tool is meant to assist Leaders in assessing the development of children participating in regular Early Child Play activity sessions. The assessments cover areas of:
   - Physical Well Being
   - Language and Cognitive Skills
   - Emotional Development
   - Social Development

The resource is designed to have these uses:

- It is a reference guide and resource for Trainers when planning, leading and assessing Early Child Play Leader workshops for teachers, leaders and coaches working with young children.
- It is a self-assessment tool for Leaders to help determine the effectiveness of the Early Child Play activities planned with children.
- It is recognition of the contribution of Right To Play Leaders and Trainers whose volunteer and work efforts are helping many children throughout the world. For this reason we have included photos of Right To Play Leaders and the children they teach.
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CHAPTER ONE

For the ECP Trainer: “Holistic Child Development”

**Aims:**

To inform Trainers about:

- development of children in their early years
- tools and information to use in order to more effectively train new ECP Leaders
1. The Importance of What You Do

“Early brain development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.”
- J. Fraser Mustard, 2006

As Trainers working with Leaders to implement Early Child Play programs, it is important that you fully understand and recognize the impact and necessity of the work you are doing. The last several years have proved to be pivotal in the understanding of early child development. Through extensive research studies, it has become more and more clear that the experiences children have in their early years impact them throughout the rest of their lives. This is very different from what was known about or thought of in regards to the early years in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rethinking the Brain¹</th>
<th>OLD THINKING...</th>
<th>NEW THINKING...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How a brain develops depends on the genes you are born with.</td>
<td>How a brain develops hinges on complex interplay between the genes you are born with and the experiences you have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The experiences you have at a very young age have little impact on later development.</td>
<td>Early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain and the nature and extent of adult capacities.</td>
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<td>A secure relationship with a primary caregiver creates a favorable context for early childhood development and learning.</td>
<td>Early interactions don’t just create a context, they directly affect the way the brain is “wired”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain development is linear: the brain’s capacity to learn and change grows steadily as an infant progresses towards adulthood.</td>
<td>Brain development is non-linear: there are prime times for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A toddler’s brain is much less active than the brain of a college student.</td>
<td>By the time children reach the age of three, their brains are twice as active as those of adults. Activity drops during adolescence.</td>
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</tbody>
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As you can see from the chart above, the work you are doing will have an incredible impact both directly and indirectly on children as they develop throughout the early years. Your role as a Trainer is two-fold:

1. You are working to help leaders, teachers and coaches effectively implement Right To Play’s Early Child Play program; and
2. You are working to help all members of partner organizations and the community better understand the importance of focusing on children during their early years of child development.

Use the chart above as a constant reminder of the importance of the work you are a part of.

Be proud – speak up – and share what you know!

Did You Know?

Throughout this resource you will find important facts and information about early child development. Be sure to read the statements listed in the “Did You Know” boxes. They will help to increase your awareness of the importance of well-designed programs for children during their early years.
2. Early Child Development Quiz

Every child goes through stages of development at a different rate. However, studies have been done to determine the average ages at which children go through certain stages of development. The quiz below is intended to provide you an opportunity to test your knowledge of early child development. You are not meant to be an expert. This quiz is an opportunity to introduce you to some of the developmental stages we will discuss in greater detail throughout the following resource.

Good luck!

Source: http://pediatrics.about.com/library/quiz and modified using Ages and Stages, Ohio State University

1. The average child learns to walk backwards before it learns to run.
   a) True
   b) False

2. My speech is half understandable, I know 6 body parts, and I can make a tower of 6 cubes, but I can’t hop yet. How old am I?
   a) 2-years-old
   b) 3-years-old
   c) 4-years-old
   d) 5-years-old

3. At age 3 years, the average child can name how many colours?
   a) 0
   b) 1
   c) 4
   d) 8

4. By age 3 1/2 years, the average child can balance on each foot for how long?
   a) 3 seconds
   b) 4 seconds
   c) 6 seconds
   d) 2 minutes

5. Most infants can bang 2 cubes held in their hands by the time they are...
   a) 4 months
   b) 6 months
   c) 9 months
   d) 11 months

6. Most children say their first word, besides mama and dada, between the ages of...
   a) 9 and 18 months
   b) 12 and 15 months
   c) 12 and 24 months

Did You Know?
Language development varies considerably from child to child, even within the same family during the ages 2 to 5. Some preschoolers develop language skills at a steady rate. Others master words in an uneven manner. Some children are talkative while others are quiet. Boys often start talking later than girls, but this evens out by school age. A 2-year-old may begin with a starter vocabulary of 2-word micro-sentences. By the time the child turns 5, they have a 2,500 word vocabulary and usually speak in complete sentences.
d) 15 and 24 months

7. The average 2-year-old...
   a) knows 200 words
   b) follows 2 step commands
   c) speaks in 2 word sentences
   d) both b and c

8. Most toddlers can...
   a) walk well by 15 months
   b) walk up steps by 21 months
   c) run by 20 months
   d) all of the above

9. By what age does the average baby triple its birth weight?
   a) 9 months
   b) 12 months
   c) 15 months
   d) 18 months

10. Between the ages of 11 and 22 months, most children can say about...
    a) 2-3 words
    b) 4-6 words
    c) 6-9 words
    d) 8-12 words

11. Which milestone do most children learn first?
    a) hopping
    b) kicking a ball
    c) throwing a ball

12. I can roll over, grasp a rattle, reach for things, have begun feeding myself, but can’t wave bye-bye yet. How old am I?
    a) 4 months
    b) 5 months
    c) 6 months
    d) none of the above

13. You can often estimate how tall a child will be by doubling its height at what age?
    a) birth

14. By what age does the average baby double its birth weight?
    a) 3 months
    b) 4 months
    c) 5 months
    d) 6 months

15. Most children can get dressed by themselves, without any help, by the time they are...
    a) 2 ½ years old
    b) 3 ½ years old
    c) 4 ½ years old
    d) 5 ½ years old

16. Parallel plays refers to the fact that younger children...
    a) like to play competitive games with other children
    b) usually play alone next to other children who are also playing alone
    c) like to play non-competitive games in groups

17. By age 4 years, most children can...
    a) copy a square
    b) copy a circle
    c) copy a cross
    d) draw a person with 6 body parts

18. In its first year, the average baby grows about...
    a) 5 inches
    b) 10 inches
    c) 15 inches
    d) 20 inches
Answer Sheet

Check your answers using the answer sheet below. NOTE: These answers are based on North American averages so may vary depending on location.

1. The average child learns to walk backwards before it learns to run.
   a) True
   b) False
   The average child does learn to walk backwards (between 12 and 16 months) before it learns to run (between 13 and 19 months).

2. My speech is half understandable, I know 6 body parts, and I can make a tower of 6 cubes, but I can’t hop yet. How old am I?
   a) 2-years-old
   b) 3-years-old
   c) 4-years-old
   d) 5-years-old
   Most 3-year-olds have speech that is half understandable, know 6 body parts, and can make a tower with 6 cubes. Children don’t usually learn to hop until after they are 3-years-old though.

3. At age 3 years, the average child can name how many colours?
   a) 0
   b) 1
   c) 4
   d) 8
   The average 3-year-old only knows 1 colour. By the time they are 4 1/2-years-old, most children can name 4 colours.

4. By age 3 1/2 years, the average child can balance on each foot for how long?
   a) 3 seconds
   b) 4 seconds
   c) 6 seconds
   d) 2 minutes
   By age 3 1/2 years, the average child can balance on each foot for 3 seconds. This increases to 4 seconds by age 4 years and 6 seconds at around age 5 years.

5. Most infants can bang 2 cubes held in their hands by the time they are...
   a) 4 months
   b) 6 months
   c) 9 months
   d) 11 months
   Some infants can bang 2 cubes held in their hands by the time they are 6 months old. However, by 9 months, fewer than 75 percent of infants have this skill. Most aren’t able to bang blocks together until they are 11 months old.

6. Most children say their first word, besides mama and dada, between the ages of...
   a) 9 and 18 months
   b) 12 and 15 months
   c) 12 and 24 months
   d) 15 and 24 months
Most children say their first word, besides mama and dada, between the ages of 9 and 18 months.

7. The average 2 year old...
   a) knows 200 words
   b) follows 2 step commands
   c) speaks in 2 word sentences
   d) both b and c
   The average 2-year-old has a 50 word vocabulary, can follow 2 step commands, and can speak in 2 word sentences.

8. Most toddlers can...
   a) walk well by 15 months
   b) walk up steps by 21 months
   c) run by 20 months
   d) all of the above
   Most toddlers can walk well by 15 months, walk up steps by 21 months, and run by 20 months.

9. By what age does the average baby triple their birth weight?
   a) 9 months
   b) 12 months
   c) 15 months
   d) 18 months
   The average baby triples its birth weight by the time it is about 12 months old.

10. Between the ages of 11 and 22 months, most children can say about...
    a) 2-3 words
    b) 4-6 words
    c) 6-9 words
    d) 8-12 words
    Between the ages of 11 and 22 months, most children can say about 4-6 words.

11. Which milestone do most children learn first?
    a) hopping
    b) kicking a ball
    c) throwing a ball
    The average child can kick a ball by age 18 months, throw a ball by 20 months, and hop by 3 1/2 years.

12. I can roll over, grasp a rattle, reach for things, have begun feeding myself, but can't wave bye-bye yet. How old am I?
    a) 4 months
    b) 5 months
    c) 6 months
    d) none of the above
    Most children can roll over by 5 1/2 months, grasp a rattle by 4 months, reach for things by 5 1/2 months, begin feeding themselves between 5 and 6 months, but don't begin to wave bye-bye until they are 7-14 months old. So this infant would likely be about 6 months old.

13. You can often estimate how tall a child will be by doubling its height at what age?
    a) birth
    b) 12 months old
    c) 2-years-old
    d) 3-years-old
    Although there are many methods to predict a child's future height, one that is popular is to just double its
height at age 2 years. However, a child's adult height is influenced by a number of factors, including genetics, gender, and overall health and nutrition. A child’s height cannot be definitively determined at such a young age.

14. By what age does the average baby double its birth weight?

a) 3 months  
b) 4 months  
c) 5 months  
d) 6 months  
The average baby doubles its birth weight by the time it is about 3 months old.

15. Most children can get dressed by themselves, without any help, by the time they are...

a) 2 ½ years old  
b) 3 ½ years old  
c) 4 ½ years old  
d) 5 ½ years old  
Most children can get dressed by themselves, without any help, by the time they are 4 1/2-years-old. Only about half of children can dress themselves without help at age 3 1/2.

16. Parallel plays refers to the fact that younger children...

a) like to play competitive games with other children  
b) usually play alone next to other children who are also playing alone  
c) like to play non-competitive games in groups  
Parallel play, common at age 2 to 3 years, refers to the fact that younger children usually play alone next to other children who are also playing alone. Children don’t usually play cooperatively in groups until age 4 and don’t usually play competitive games with other children until age 5 or 6.

17. By age 4 years, most children can...

a) copy a square  
b) copy a circle  
c) copy a cross  
d) draw a person with 6 body parts  
Most children can copy a circle by age 3-4 years. They can copy a cross by age 4 1/2, copy a square by age 4 1/2 to 6, and draw a person with 6 body parts by age 5 1/2.

18. In its first year, the average baby grows about...

a) 5 inches  
b) 10 inches  
c) 15 inches  
d) 20 inches  
In its first year, the average baby grows about 10 inches.
3. Exploring Healthy Child Development

Every child has the right to the best possible childhood.

Current research clearly demonstrates that early child development (from birth to about age 6) sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. When the family and community understand the significance of a healthy early learning environment, significant opportunities for enhancing programs for children can be planned.

Do Early Child Play Leaders and Trainers have to be experts in child development?

It is not expected that participants in the Right To Play training programs are experts in the field of child development or early childhood education. However, a basic understanding of how the early years influence all aspects of the individual’s later life, is fundamental to making significant changes at the individual and the community level. This document, designed for trainers, will serve as a background in early brain development and its influence on healthy child development. It will also serve to assist trainers in deepening their understanding of how young children learn best and why this knowledge is clearly addressed in the Right To Play manuals.

What should I know about brain development?

The amount and the quality of research into the brain development of young children have been increasing at an unparalleled rate. New technologies have allowed researchers a closer examination of the processes involved in healthy brain development and the pivotal role that is played by emotions. New ways of determining the kinds of environments and experiences that promote or impair the development of the brain are emerging.
It has been found that:
- the roots of economic productivity in adult life can be linked to early childhood
- health risks in adulthood can be linked to early childhood

There has been a convergence of research from very different fields that are consistently demonstrating how:

**child development has long reaching effects into adulthood**

When the development of the young child is healthy this leads to very positive long-term benefits.

![Healthy childhood to long-term benefits diagram](image)

**Comparing Humans to other Animal Species**

Consider the abilities of the young of other animal species and the human infant. Compare their ability to move – to run, fly, or swim; their ability to think, to eat and to learn survival skills quickly. Most animals are born with instinctive skills that will help them to survive in the environment into which they are typically born. In contrast, the brains of human infants develop as a response to the environment into which they are born.

**Experience-based Brain Development**

Human brain development appears to have undergone significant changes or adaptation once humans were able to walk on two feet. This led to a significant increase in brain capacity as the brain now had to think in diverse ways. The brain size required for these increased functions was much larger. Unlike other animals, human babies are born prematurely, with their brains being one-quarter the size of
the adult brain. By age 3, the brain has more than tripled in size as the neural connections increase and wire the brain.

**Did You Know?**

Early experiences have a definite impact on the architecture of the brain – the way that it functions, the way it is set up for learning.

**When does the development of the human brain begin?**

The development of the brain begins soon after conception and continues after birth. It develops in accordance to the needs of the environment. The changes that occur in the brain in the early years of life ensure that an infant becomes highly aware of the environment in which he or she was born. An infant raised in perilous circumstances – a rain forest teeming with predators, a war-torn country, an urban jungle, or a violent home – will develop internal defenses that are highly sensitive to signs of danger.

A child born into a loving, nurturing environment responds positively to that environment and develops positive social and emotional attachments that he or she takes into adulthood.

Early brain development is long lasting. The brain assumes that the environment into which the infant is born is the permanent environment of the child or adult and so is wired in a way to be defensive throughout life. Research has demonstrated that:
An infant reared in perilous surroundings... will develop brain connections and chemical responses that are highly sensitive to signs of danger. Early brain development is for the long term... Even if an individual finds herself in a safe and secure environment in her adult years, her brain is likely to stay on constant lookout for the slightest signs of danger- to the detriment of her health, well-being, ability to cope and competencies throughout life. On the other hand, an infant born into nurturing surroundings experiences very different sensory stimulation and the brain develops connections and chemical reactions that support more optimal development and better health, well-being, and competencies.

- McCain, Mustard, and Shanker, Early Years Study 2

**What does this mean to you as a Trainer in ECP?**

When training Leaders and working with parents, it is important to emphasize need to:

- protect children from stressful and traumatic experiences where possible
- create a safe space for children to talk, ask questions
- provide many opportunities for children to experience positive interactions with adults and other children
- provide many positive and healthy examples of how to react to and deal with challenging and traumatic situations

**What is the human brain made of?**

The human brain is a jelly like structure that is composed of neurons or nerve cells. The neurons must form trillions of connections with each other to form pathways in the brain that help us to smoothly and automatically perform all functions. When an infant is born, only a few of these connections are present – ones that allow for the simple functioning of the infant (limited vision, sucking motions, etc.).
**What makes the brain connections develop?**

The brain connections begin to build with any type of stimulation – noise, light, and changes in temperature; the touch, voice, and smell of those who care for the baby. As these connections continuously increase, they create pathways in the brain that expand and help to speed up the child’s ability to function. The more we repeat that function the easier we are able to do it or remember how to do it. Consider a baby learning to roll over. At first it appears to be a random action but the baby repeats and repeats the action until she can coordinate her muscles and roll over quickly and at will.

In other words, the brain of the infant at birth is filled with the neurons it needs but it requires extensive stimulation to activate the wiring between the neurons which carry the signals from the brain to the body to actively perform the functions. The connections amongst the neurons and neural pathways are dependent upon use:

- repeated use leads to strong connections
- if the connections are not used often enough those connections are lost

This process, known as neural pruning, makes it difficult to activate the neural connections at a later date. The way the brain is wired by about age 6 is the way it will probably remain for life.
Did You Know?

The first opportunity a mother has to prepare her child for school is in the womb? Drugs, alcohol, smoking, nutrition and heredity all affect the growing baby. A mother can help her baby by eating nutritious food, avoiding drugs, and keeping her stress down.

Stages of development

As a child grows up, his or her development progresses through sequential stages within each of the learning domains, starting from the day the child is conceived. Each stage builds on the previous stage. Development in one domain affects development in others.
4. Windows of Opportunity

**What are the windows of opportunity?**

As a child progresses through these building blocks or stages of development, there are specific times, or windows of opportunity in the early years when a child is developmentally ready to develop more advanced skills given the appropriate environment stimulation from:

- parents
- siblings
- other adults
- peers

These windows of opportunity, or critical periods, are the foundation for later development and appear to have two sequential stages:

1. an age range when the brain is primed and best able to benefit from specific experiences
2. a time period during which the child no longer has the capacity to benefit from the experience in the same way

If these most teachable moments are missed or if opportunities to benefit from outside stimulation are missed, a child may have difficulty learning a particular skill later and the development of other skills may be also reduced. These windows of opportunity occur for important areas of neural development and skill development.

**An example of a missed window of opportunity**

One example of a window of opportunity is the beginning of emotional control. Development of this skill begins between birth and age 2. A child may be assisted in this area of development by a comforting adult who consistently helps her learn to calm herself down when distressed. Having some control of one's emotions during failure or frustration can smooth the way the brain is wired by about age six is the way it will probably remain for life.
adjustment to school experiences. Development of social competence with peers provides another example of a window of opportunity. This window begins at about age 3, when a child shows a spontaneous interest in playing with other children. The window extends to about age 6 or 7. Children who have not developed the social skills needed for positive interaction with peers by early elementary school have been observed to consistently behave in ways that lead to rejection by peers. This is an example of a missed window of opportunity that has a negative impact on the child – and potentially on the child’s future adult life.

This is why the work in the early childhood field is of such importance. Community resources need to be organized around helping new parents to understand the significance of the early years. This understanding will help to eliminate the need for many of the programs aimed at improving or rectifying preventable problems.

**Did You Know?**

By the time a child reaches three years of age, his brain is twice as active as an adult’s?

**How can we help children develop effectively?**

If young children can be engaged in active programs that build on the social and emotional skills at the same time as developing physical and cognitive skills, the long lasting results into adulthood are very significant.

The following graph demonstrates the critical stages of brain development and the early ages at which our ability to benefit from experiences both begins as well as drops off. Offering stimulating programs for children early on in life is critical to the well-being of children and ultimately the society in which they live.
This graph helps to illustrate the following:

- the window of opportunity for children to develop a strong sense of both hearing and vision starts at birth and begins to drop off around 2-years-old
- the window of opportunity for children to develop an ability to recognize and understand symbols as well as maintain some emotional control begins a few months after birth and starts to drop off between 2 and 3-years-old
- the windows of opportunity for children to develop social skills to interact with peers and an ability to use and understand numbers begins at approximately two-years-old and starts to drop off between 4 and 5-years-old

Another way of representing this information about windows of opportunity can be seen in the individual graphs on the following page:
Reflecting on Windows of Opportunity

If a child is not provided with opportunities to interact with other children in a playful environment during his first five years of life, what could be the impact on the child?

If many children are not offered this opportunity, what could be the impact on the community?

What are three things you can do to help children develop a broader range of vocabulary?

How can a broader vocabulary help a child as he/she develops into an adult?
**What can Leaders and parents do to promote maximum use of the windows of opportunity during the early years?**

- Divide children in different groups so they can learn how to work with others and develop social skills.
- Use a wide range of vocabulary – teach children new words and introduce them to a broader range of vocabulary.
- If vision or hearing tests are available, take advantage of them at an early age.
- Teach about a wide variety of emotions.
- Demonstrate different positive ways of managing emotions.
- Provide opportunities for children to ask questions.
- Work hard to create a safe space for children to grow, explore, experiment and learn.
- Give children many opportunities to be involved in their own learning – that is, let them experiment, let them play, let them explore the environment they are in – in an active way.
- Encourage children to be actively involved – move away from rote teaching, and include more experiential opportunities (this will help to develop all of their senses).
- Encourage parents to use the ECP pamphlet to guide their play and activities at home with children.

Offering stimulating and development-based programs for children from birth to age 5 increases the opportunities for young children to effectively develop these skills and many more during the key windows of opportunity. Thus, we increase the possibility of healthy development throughout the rest of childhood and adulthood.
5. The Domains of Learning

Research and literature generally addresses five areas of development. Each of these domains is independent of, but influenced by, the other domains. When delivering ECP Leader workshops it is important to recognize that the five coloured balls that are the foundation of the ECP program correspond to the widely recognized five areas of development. The tables below map out the links between child development theories/research and the areas developed by each of the ECP five coloured balls.

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<th>Physical Well-Being and Motor Development</th>
<th>Black Body Ball Games Physical Development</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Presence or absence of major disease or a chronic condition</td>
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<td>▪ Sufficient health to minimize absences from school</td>
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<td>▪ Ability to resist infection</td>
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<td>▪ Flexibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Development of healthy lungs, bones, muscles and hearts</td>
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<th>Green Health Ball Games Development of a State of Well-being</th>
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<td>Addresses:</td>
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<td>▪ Dangers of drugs and infectious diseases</td>
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<td>▪ Importance of physical activity, hygiene, diet, sleep and healthy environment</td>
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<td>Social Knowledge and Competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Skills necessary to effectively interact with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ An awareness of what are socially acceptable and age appropriate ways of relating to people</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Having the communication and social skills necessary to establish and promote relationships with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Ability to control one’s actions</td>
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<td>▪ Ability to cooperate with others</td>
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<tr>
<th>Emotional Health and a Positive Approach to New Experiences</th>
<th>Yellow Spirit Ball Feelings and Emotional Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Emotional maturity to delay gratification (shown by taking turns, for example)</td>
<td>Addresses:</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Persistence in tasks that are boring or difficult</td>
<td>▪ Self-esteem</td>
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<td>▪ Self-confidence and a healthy curiosity</td>
<td>▪ Optimism</td>
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<td>▪ Regulation of one’s emotions in order to handle failures and upsets</td>
<td>▪ Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Capacity for reflection, allowing one to avoid acting too impulsively and to learn from experience</td>
<td>▪ Hope</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Security</td>
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<td>▪ Humour</td>
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<td>▪ Coping skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Self-expression</td>
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<td>▪ Expression of positive and negative emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Skills</td>
<td>Red Mind Ball</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Expressive skills, ability to express one’s ideas and feelings</td>
<td>▪ Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Receptive skills, ability to understand what others are communicating verbally</td>
<td>▪ Perception</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Concentration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Memory</td>
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<td>▪ Insight</td>
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<td>▪ Understanding</td>
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<td>▪ Numeracy</td>
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<td>▪ Literacy</td>
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<td>▪ Knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Strategy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Organization</td>
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</table>

**General Knowledge and Cognitive Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways in which children organize information</th>
<th>▪ The capacity to remember information and analyze it</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ The capacity to draw on prior knowledge in assimilating new information</td>
<td>▪ Age appropriate knowledge about people, places, things and events common to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Age appropriate knowledge about people, places, things and events common to</td>
<td>children’s living context</td>
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6. The Importance of Play

Children learn and develop through social interactions. It can be clearly demonstrated that play engages a young child and promotes learning. A panel of professionals from the early childhood education sectors in Ontario, Canada noted in their esteemed framework *Early Learning for Every Child Today*:

“Play is how children make sense of the world and is an effective method of learning for young children. Ideas and skills become meaningful tools for learning...Play engages children’s attention when it offers a challenge that is within the child’s capacity to master.” ²

**Why is play important?**

**Play:**

- expands intelligence
- is a testing ground for language and reasoning, connecting to the challenges children face in school, such as literacy, math, and science concepts
- stimulates the imagination, encouraging creative problem-solving
- helps develop confidence, self-esteem, a sense of strengths and weaknesses, and a positive attitude toward learning
- is a significant factor in brain and muscle development

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**Did You Know?**

Everyone can benefit from regular exercise. A child who is active will:

- have stronger muscles and bones
- have a leaner body because exercise helps control body fat
- be less likely to become overweight
- decrease the risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- possibly lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels
- have a better outlook on life

The Early Child Play Program
Right To Play’s Early Child Play Program has been developed to provide opportunities for young children to play together through the wide variety of games. Sample schedules are provided that will serve as a guide to planning. However, in order to adapt these plans to best suit the specific needs of children and the communities in which they live, Leaders are encouraged to use:

- their own experiences,
- their knowledge of the games, and
- their understanding of the children with whom they are working.

Guidelines are provided in the ECP Leader Manual for adapting games to meet the developmental needs of the children and the cultural context of the community. In addition, the next two sections of this resource provide some key considerations to keep in mind when selecting, modifying and adapting activities. Much of the decision-making for these adaptations or modifications should be based on what is known as developmentally appropriate practice.

“To plan effective programs, we must apply what we know about children’s stages of development. We must recognize that, in some way, each child is different”.

- Early Child Play Leader Manual

The Early Child Play program has been designed to provide opportunities for young children to play and learn together through a wide variety of games and activities.
7. Developmentally Appropriate Practice

When working with adults who work with young children it is important to promote the concepts of developmentally appropriate practice. These practices result from the process of Early Child Play Leaders making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

1) children’s development and learning
2) each child’s individual strengths, interests and needs
3) the social and cultural contexts in which each child lives

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice takes into consideration:**
- What is known about child development and learning
- What is known about children’s individual strengths, interests and needs
- What is known about the socio-cultural contexts of the community

**1) What is known about child development and learning?**
Ask Leaders to question their knowledge of child development:

“What knowledge do you have of how humans typically develop by age?”

Gaining knowledge in this area allows for activities to be planned that would typically be appropriate to the majority of children in that age group. This understanding helps to ensure that the activities chosen are:

- sufficiently challenging
- achievable
- of interest to most children of this age
- healthy and safe for them to try

To gain a greater understanding of the ages and stages of early child development, review the following and encourage the Leaders in your workshops to do the same:
2) **What is known about children’s individual strengths, interests and needs?**

Encourage the Leaders you work with to question the knowledge they have about each individual child they work with:

“What knowledge do you have of how each individual child you work with varies from the norm?”

Gaining knowledge in this area enables Leaders to adapt their Early Child Play sessions for individual children or groups of children where necessary. Adapting programs to fit the needs, skills and experiences of individual children is essential in promoting the positive development of each child.

3) **What is known of the social and cultural contexts in which children live?**

Empower Leaders to question and understand the knowledge they have about the cultural norms or each child they work with:

“What knowledge do you have of the social and cultural norms that can influence children’s interest and participation in activities?”

This knowledge helps to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families.⁴ The culture of a child’s family must be respected when planning activities for a child. Cultural norms influence the expectations both children and parents have for the development and experiences of each child.

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⁴ National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through 8: A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children*, (Washington: NAEYC, 1997).
Encourage Leaders to consider these three factors involved in developmentally appropriate practice when planning sessions and modifying Early Child Play games and activities. Your frequent and consistent reminder of these factors will empower them to be more successful in their practice, and to create sessions that will best suit the children with whom they are working.
8. Principles of Child Development

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has identified principles of child development and learning that Trainers and Leaders should consider when planning developmentally appropriate activities. These principles include:

1) **Development in one area of development influences and is influenced by development in other learning domains.**

For example, when an infant begins to crawl or walk his ability to explore his surroundings expands and therefore his cognitive abilities expand. His spatial awareness grows and develops. A child whose physical abilities prevent such independent movement, for example, a child who is unable to crawl, has potentially fewer opportunities to broaden his thinking. An understanding and awareness of this inter-connectedness can assist an ECP Leader in many ways. For example, when working with a child who has a visual impairment, this principle reminds ECP Leaders to introduce other means of sensory development to compensate for the lack of visual abilities.

In your own life...

Think of a child you know now, or have known in the past, who was delayed in one area of development, for example, hearing. How did this affect other areas of development for that child?

2) **Development occurs in a relatively orderly sequence, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired.**

Research shows that children generally develop in a predictable sequence during the first nine years. Predictable changes occur in all areas of learning – physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and language. An understanding of this typical sequence of growth allows ECP Leaders to plan ECP sessions that will more likely meet the developmental needs of the children they work with. Refer the ECP Leaders to the developmental
continuum listed in the ECP Leader Manual (Chapter 4, part 1). This continuum will help them to determine the strengths and areas of concern for individual children as well as for a group of children so that specific ECP lesson plans can be designed to meet those needs.

3) **Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child as well as unevenly within different areas of each child’s functioning.**

Each child develops in his or her own unique way within the different areas of development. Individual variations can occur because of the uniqueness of individuals, especially when children have special learning and developmental needs. When an ECP Leader has the same expectations for all children, both the children and the Leader suffer. Encouraging ECP Leaders to recognize the varying rates of development each child goes through will help to ensure that ECP sessions are designed to promote healthy development for each individual child. This will also assist ECP Leaders in having more realistic expectations and more successful ECP sessions.

```
In your own life...

Consider your own learning. What came easily?

What did you have to work at to achieve success?

What affected your learning?
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4) **Early experiences have both cumulative and delayed effects on development and learning.**

All experiences, whether they are positive or negative build on each other and influence the development of the individual. Those that occur only occasionally have minimal effect but those positive or negative experiences that occur frequently have long-lasting and powerful cumulative effects. For example, those young children who have had positive social experiences with other children in a variety of settings will develop as socially competent. Those children who have limited experiences with others may feel socially incompetent which may accelerate social problems over time. Helping ECP Leaders to understand this will not only help them to set up ECP sessions that promote positive social
interactions, but will also help to remind them of the importance and long-term impacts of the work they are doing.

5) Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
Culture plays a powerful role in influencing the development of all children. Every culture structures and interprets children’s development and behavior. Even the child, for example, who lives in a loving, supportive home environment, may still be significantly affected by cultural biases such as racism or sexism. ECP Leaders need to understand the influence of socio-cultural contexts on learning and accept a variety of ways for children to express their developmental achievements.

In your work life...
What are some social norms that will affect the activities you choose to teach Teachers/Leaders/Coaches from the Early Child Play manual?

6) Play is an important vehicle for children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as a reflection of their development.
Young children are active constructors of knowledge. Development and learning are a result of interactive processes and play provides a very supportive environment for these developing processes. When children are engaged in play, adults have insight into children’s development and have opportunities to support the development of new strategies. Play provides an opportunity for practicing newly acquired skills and attempting new or challenging tasks. Children solve complex problems that they would otherwise not be able to do. Play also supports children’s physical, emotional, and social development. They can take on roles, experience new situations, and challenge themselves in the safety of the play environment. ECP Leaders who are aware of the power of sport and play have the opportunity to better understand...
the value of the tool they are using. Additionally, this understanding helps to inspire ECP Leaders to plan and implement ECP sessions with enthusiasm and focus.

7) **Development advances when children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills as well as when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of their present mastery.**

Research has demonstrated that children need to be engaged in successful learning experiences most of the time in order to remain motivated and determined. When children are presented constantly with large challenges their motivation and determination has been shown to decrease. It is easy for children to give up when confronted with failure. Most of the time children should be given tasks that they are able to accomplish successfully. Encouraging ECP Leaders to understand this helps them to effectively move children forward in their present level of development. They can do this by planning ECP activities that are at and just beyond the children’s current level of development.

8) **Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure.**

If children do not feel secure and safe it is difficult for learning to happen. Relationships with supportive adults and with other children affect the learning in all areas of development. These strong relationships begin in the family but extend to include community members, facilitators, teachers, etc. Reminding ECP Leaders of the importance of physically and psychologically safe environments helps them to plan their ECP sessions in order to create an optimal safe experience. Encourage ECP Leaders to review the information in their Leader Manual that reviews the importance of and strategies for physical safety and emotional safety (Chapter 3, parts 1 and 2).
In your work life...

How can the Early Child Play manual help Leaders to choose activities that will help children in their community to develop to their potential?

Your goal is to set up a community in which young children will be able to “develop and learn best.” How can you set up a learning community with parents and Leaders that demonstrates to them the significance of ECP activities to the well-being of children?

The Early Child Play Games manual has an extensive list of activities and it is up to the Leader, Teacher or Coach to make informed decisions about which activities to choose at any particular point in time. A number of modifications are presented, for example, based on gender and differing abilities. These are very important but for young children these adaptations or modifications are only some of the changes each Leader may choose to make based on the specific children participating in the activity.

How to choose activities
Encourage ECP Leaders to refer to the ECP Leader Manual (Planning an Early Child Play Session (Chapter 4: Step One) when they are planning their ECP sessions and selecting appropriate activities. In addition, ask them to consider the following:

1. Question the appropriateness of each activity based on developmentally appropriate criteria.
2. Choose activities that will move children forward consistently.
3. Plan for small challenges. Children actually progress more quickly than if the activities are too challenging and outside of the boundaries of their skill development.

Examples of reflective questions to ask when choosing appropriate activities:

When assisting ECP Leaders in developing their first session plan, or selecting their first games, it may be helpful to use the questions listed below to help them consider the appropriateness of each selected activity:

- How old are the children? What are the interests of a child of this age?
- Do the children have the skills needed for this activity?
- Will the children understand the instructions? If not, how can I help them to understand?
- How can I demonstrate the activity in a more appropriate way?
- Are their cultural expectations that I should consider when planning this game?
- How can I ensure that more family members or care givers take part in our program as well? How can I draw more community members to the activity?

Did You Know?

When programs for young children are set up to include parents, they can influence the way parents relate to and care for children in their home. These programs can vastly improve outcomes for children’s behaviour, learning, and health in later life. The earlier these programs begin, the better the outcomes for the children.
10. Delivering the ECP Leader Workshop

Delivering an ECP Leader Workshop may not be easy, but it is certainly important. Remember that you do not have to be an expert in child development to deliver these workshops, but you must feel confident in the importance of play as a tool for children’s healthy development. Keep this resource and use it as a tool throughout the planning process of your workshop, and as a reminder each day of key points of information to share with the Leaders you work with.

If you have questions or concerns that come up throughout the workshop, do not feel as though you need to answer them all immediately. Write them down and send them to the Program, Monitoring and Evaluation Department (jporter@righttoplay.com). We will gladly look into finding additional resources, referring to the panel of Early Childhood Education experts who helped us to create this resource, or to creating additional materials or responses that will best equip you to deal with issues as they arise.

Thank you again for your incredible contribution to the lives of young children within your community!

100 Years From Now

One hundred years from now
It will not matter
What kind of car I drove,
What kind of house I lived in,
How much I had in my bank
Nor what my clothes looked like.
One hundred years from now
It will not matter
What kind of school I attended,
What kind of typewriter I used,
How large or small my church,
But the world may be ...
a little better because...
I was important in the life of a child.

- Forest Witcraft
CHAPTER TWO

For the ECP Leader:
“Evaluating the Success of the Early Child Play Program”

Aim:
To equip Leaders with methods for measuring the success of the Early Child Play program with children
11. Evaluating the Success of the Early Child Play Program

When evaluating the success of the Early Child Play program, it is important to consider the effects of the program on the development of the children. It is expected that children will go through changes in all learning areas as a result of participating in ECP activities from all five of the domains of learning (the five coloured balls). By recognizing the areas in which children are learning and the areas where more attention is needed, you will be better equipped to plan future ECP sessions. The checklists below will help you to assess the growth of children in your ECP sessions in each of the developmental areas.
Black Body Ball, Green Health Ball - Physical Well-Being

Group Observations
Has there been positive change observed in those children who began the program:

- too tired or sick to participate fully in the program
  - Yes______  No_____
- late
  - Yes______  No_____
- hungry
  - Yes______  No_____
- inactive and unfit
  - Yes______  No_____

Individual Observations
Rate each child’s:

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<th>High</th>
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<td>5</td>
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- coordination
- ability to manipulate objects
- level of energy throughout the day
- overall physical development
- overall strength
- fine motor skills
- cleanliness
- ability to sit still, restlessness
- ability to stick to a task, distractibility

Reflection:
What community supports are in place to support a family in need? What additional supports does this community need? How can these programs be accessed?
Red Mind Ball - Language and Cognitive Skills

Group Observations
Has there been positive change observed in those children who began the program:

- with poor concentration and memory: Yes______ No_____
- unable to anticipate upcoming events or activities: Yes______ No_____
- unable to express themselves and to communicate: Yes______ No_____

Individual Observations
Rate each child’s ability to:

- use language effectively: 1 2 3 4 5
- listen attentively: 1 2 3 4 5
- tell a story: 1 2 3 4 5
- take part in imaginative play: 1 2 3 4 5
- communicate own needs in a way understandable to adults and peers: 1 2 3 4 5
- understand on first try what is being said to him/her: 1 2 3 4 5
- remember things easily: 1 2 3 4 5
- follow rules and instructions: 1 2 3 4 5
- be curious about the world: 1 2 3 4 5

Would you say that this child:

- is interested in games involving numbers: Yes______ No_____
- demonstrates special skills or talents in music: Yes______ No_____
- demonstrates special skills or talents in athletics, dance: Yes______ No_____
- demonstrates special skills or talents in problem-solving in a creative way: Yes______ No_____

Reflection
What opportunities are available to children in this community to engage in play, to express themselves in creative ways? What is needed to provide some of these opportunities? Are children encouraged to talk with other children and adults, to listen to stories being told and to engage in imaginative storytelling themselves?
Yellow Spirit Ball - Emotional Development

**Group Observations**
Has there been a positive change for those children who entered the program:
- frightened or unwilling to participate  
  Yes______ No_____
- crying or visibly upset about separating from their caregiver  
  Yes______ No_____
- generally unhappy, sad  
  Yes______ No_____

**Individual Observations**
How would you rate this child’s:

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<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td>overall emotional development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>level of confidence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of humour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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Would you say that this child:
- demonstrates self-control  
  Yes______ No_____
- shows self confidence  
  Yes______ No_____
- has fun, laughs  
  Yes______ No_____
- accepts responsibility for actions  
  Yes______ No_____
- follows directions  
  Yes______ No_____
- is eager to play a new game  
  Yes______ No_____
- is able to follow one-step instructions  
  Yes______ No_____
- is able to adjust to changes in routines  
  Yes______ No_____
- offers to help other children who have difficulty with a task  
  Yes______ No_____
- is upset when left by parent/caregiver  
  Yes______ No_____
- is distractible, has trouble sticking to any activity  
  Yes______ No_____

**Reflection**
Did the children in this program generally participate in the activities in a positive, responsive way? Did they enter the play with a willing spirit? Did they appear confident, eager to play with their peers, and willing to separate from their family for a short while?
Blue Peace Ball - Social Development

Group Observations
Has there been a positive change for those children who entered the program:
- aggressive, not willing to compromise with others  Yes______ No______
- isolated and unwilling to work or play with others  Yes _____ No _____

Individual Observations
How would you rate this child’s:
- ability to communicate effectively with Low 1 2 3 4 5 High others
- ability to get along with others 1 2 3 4 5
- trust in others 1 2 3 4 5

Would you say that this child:
- plays and works cooperatively with other children at the level appropriate for his/her age  Yes _____ No _____
- is able to play with various children  Yes _____ No _____
- demonstrates respect for other children  Yes _____ No _____
- follows directions  Yes _____ No _____
- will try to help someone who has been hurt  Yes _____ No _____
- will try to stop a quarrel or dispute  Yes _____ No _____
- comforts a child who is crying or upset  Yes _____ No _____
- helps other children who are feeling sick  Yes _____ No _____
- gets into physical fights  Yes _____ No _____
- bullies or is mean to others  Yes _____ No _____
- kicks, bites, hits other children or adults  Yes _____ No _____

Reflection
Do children tend to use their words to work together and solve problems? Are the children in this community generally peaceful and caring or do they tend to solve problems through aggression and violence? Who in the community could assist in bringing about change within the community? What supports would need to be in place for changes to occur? How can those supports be accessed?
12. Bibliography


Did You Know?

The first eight years of childhood are critically important, particularly the first three years. They are the foundation of future health, growth and development. During this period, children learn more quickly than at any other time. Babies and young children develop more rapidly and learn more quickly when they receive love and affection, attention, encouragement and mental stimulation, as well as nutritious meals and good health care.