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### *Introduction to Play and Playwork*

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Play is a conversation topic that leads us quickly to profess nostalgic words of adoration about our past engagements. Whether it was climbing trees, board games, or hide and go seek, we all like to assume that play is one thing we have in common. At its surface, play is a common thread through each child's memory train but if you look much deeper, it is easy to understand that the definition and methods of play are likely to change from person to person. Play is, in fact, as diverse as the people participating.

Beyond the quick assertion that play is one thing that once bonded us together lies another common misconception about play. This misconception is the thought that play is restricted by boundaries and guidelines. Play is not bound by a handbook nor is play bound by a list of rules provided by an external party. Instead play is genuine and inherently satisfying. We know that play is diverse and we know that play is all but boundary-less. So, what happens when a group of college students experience play again in their early twenties? This is the exact experience of our first day in our Play and Playwork course.

I quickly noticed the overhanging age bound restrictions society places on play. In the very first ice-breaker activity, it was easy to see discomfort. The discomfort was different from that of a group of 7 year olds in that it was obviously attached to some time of expectation. The game of hot potato started out somewhat uncomfortable. However, by the end of the game the room was roaring with laughter. This demonstrates how play passes through multiple phases and often begins with some level of discomfort. While the discomfort was different than that of elementary aged children, I found it refreshing to see that as time went on the experience became more genuine and started to mirror the ways a young child would have experienced the activity. For me, this solidified the notion that play is not bound by age.

In the lecture portion of the class, my eyes were opened to the true depth of the diversity of the field of play. First, it was fascinating to me that while many people are interested in the field of play there is still an overarching skepticism as to its place as the focus of rhetorical conversation. Play has historically been a significant part of development for children. Second, I appreciated the consistent conversation about the lack of boundaries and definitions present in play. To focus play with a set of defining characteristics would in fact negate the exact purpose of play. This does walk a fine line. There is a note of irony in that in order to ensure play is not bound by boundaries, we have to use a set of guidelines. It is important that play is inherently

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enjoyable and intrinsically motivating. Most importantly, true play must be open ended. While play is diverse and lacking in true definitions, there are ways we can assess the strength in play and support young people in experience true play.

As we learned in the very first activity, play is a process. We are able to deduct a set of experiences people are likely to have as they experience play from start to finish. It is likely that a person experiencing true play will experience anticipation, surprise, pleasure, understanding, strength, and lastly poise. This process offered encouragement as I reflected on my history of play. It helped me look at the types of play I engaged in. If a step was nonexistent, it helped me ask "why?". It was most likely because the type of play I was experiencing was bound by society.

I began to further believe that play has a place in research as we discussed the ways that play shapes the personality of adults. Not only does play physically shape the way children interact with the world around them, but play also offers opportunities for children to work on skills necessary for them to employ later in life. When I was young and would build forts with my cousins, it helped me learn cooperation and negotiation skills. When I designed and wrote a neighborhood news article with my next door neighbor, I learned to solve problems and express thoughts and feelings. Play not only has a strong hold on nearly every aspect of our childhood, but I am learning play also has a strong influence on us as adults.

The unrestrictive nature of play allows it to be one of the most freeing and imagination driven experiences in our lives. We saw that in the video of the two siblings who created world after world with a big box and things they found around the house. If restrictions were placed on us in our play, we would not be able turn a cardboard box into a spaceship. Beyond a source of imagination, play can be a source of creation and communication. Caine used the same materials used to make a spaceship in the first video to create an arcade. Uniquely, Caine's arcade was heavily reliant on the element of interaction. While he enjoyed playing it himself, he saw his role as a supporting role of the play of others who wanted to participate. He used his imagination and unrestricted options to provide a venue for cooperative and interactive play.

In our final challenge of the day, we had the opportunity to quite simply play. With a plethora of random supplies and the inspiration of Caine's arcade we broke through the anticipation and began playing. Each of us worked with classmates to create something completely unique and imagined. For some, simply creating their masterpiece was enough but for others using their creation and sharing it with others was the end goal. This exercise was bound only by time and we saw college students engage in true play. This exercise served a few

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purposes to me. First, I saw it as a reminder of what true play is. Second, it acted as a way to remind us that play is not bound by age and third, it helped me to understand that no matter how far disengaged you feel from play, play is always just a hop skip and a jump away.

Through the readings and through day one, I was consistently reminded of the diversity riddled through play. The methods of play, the venues of play, and the playing are all incredible diverse. This is because play is not restricted to a certain race, gender, socioeconomic status or capability. Anyone has the opportunity to experience true play in some form or another. Play exists for significant reasons through out our development. If we want to better understand play and its role in our development, we want the capacity to measure it. To measure play, however, is to act against the purpose of play and because of this, people are skeptical of it's place in academia. In all of its diversity, the category of play remains a common thread that connects us all. It starts in childhood and begins shaping the way we as adults experience our world.

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### *Play in Restricted Environments*

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Children's access to the world that we live in is consistently restricted by adults, society, and cultural norms. Even when the circumstances are not explicitly restrictive, it is hard to find a circumstance where young people are free to experience a park or playground without a list of rules or direct supervision. In a more direct way, children have limited access to parts of their world. If a parent were to bring their child to an office building for a day their environment would likely be significantly restricted by the design of the building and the beliefs of the parent's coworkers. When we look at the number of environments in the world that afford children the opportunity to experience true play, it doesn't take long to realized the way children experience the world is considerably restricted.

We have an obligation to ensure that these restrictions are limited in their nature and that children have safe access to the world around them. The rights of the child as outlined in the UNCRC include fundamental rights afforded to all children in the nations that have ratified the UNCRC. These rights include survival, protection and participation. Most importantly, the UNCRC considers children to be individuals severely impacted by the world around them. Furthermore, the UNCRC outlines that the needs of children are inherently different than those of adults and as a result, children deserve a unique set of rights.

Beyond the basic survival rights, Article 31 recognizes "the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to

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participate freely in cultural life and the arts.” We know that play is a fundamental piece of the development of children. In fact, it is one of the most fundamental pieces of development. Therefore, it is important that his right is recognized and affirmed.

As we further discussed the number of opportunities young people have to engage with the world without instruction, direction, or extrinsic motivation, it became more and more evident that the world is not structured to nourish young people but instead to protect young people and their development. While safety is important, I believe individualism is equally important. Unrestricted play is as innate in our children as is breathing or sleeping. Jakk Penksepp demonstrated that, even with a piece of their brain removed young rats still engaged in unrestricted play with one another. If we act to restrict the way children play, we are restricted this innate desire.

In the most extreme cases of play deprivation and neglect, we know that individuals can experience severe developmental delays. These delays are not only psychological but are also biological. The way the brain develops with and without play is drastically different. In less extreme cases, play deprivation can lead to mental health issues, social issues, and physical issues in childhood and adolescence. Further, we know that play in childhood builds a framework for adulthood. Consequently, play deprivation in childhood can lead to depression, aggression, and difficulty coping.

The world is full of environments that naturally constrict play for children. One primary example discussed this week is the hospital. Medical environments often focus only on the surface in the face of an emergency. Through holistic research, we know that introducing a child life specialist into a medical environment can have a drastic positive affect on the child's medical outcomes. For me, the introduction of a CCLS into a healthcare setting is a statement that we are invested in the future of the child and the child's holistic development as opposed to solely investing in their current health. A CCLS is focused on work with children in severe medical situations to ensure that their development is attended to and that they experience similar developmental progress to their peers that exist beyond the hospital walls.

The world today is designed to shelter children and engage them in structured opportunities for play. We know that children will gain the most from play that is unrestricted and intrinsically motivating. In every field that we work, we can easily analyze the number of opportunities the environment offers children to experience true play. If the opportunities are limited, it is our responsibility to develop more opportunities for the sake of the development of the children that experience that space.

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### *Play in Education*

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In education, atmosphere can mean the difference between a student succeeding and student falling through the cracks. When we take a minute to compare the various education methods afforded to the young people in our nation, the decision to place your child in one school or another can be pretty daunting. When we expand that view to the global map and we look at schools like the kindergarten in Fiji, the comparison shines even more light on the situation. Today, the majority of us will enroll our children in traditional public education. This method of education accommodates only a small portion of the students and it fails the rest.

School supports our students in a vast number of ways. Not only does it act as an academic support structure, but it also acts to support the social, emotional, and creative development of our children. In the debate that surrounds preschools across the country, we seem to be focused on preparing younger and younger children for admission into an ivy-league university. Research tells us that rushing our children into rigorous academic programs does not speed up the rate at which our children develop. In some cases, rushing academia can even slow that rate at which children are developing. All too often schools focus that vast majority of their resources on supporting the academic development of the children and they neglect the social, emotional, and creative development. We are now measuring that this can have serious negative implications for our children.

As the debate on education continues to pick up momentum, we see more and more options for education. In our panel conversation we heard diverse voices explain how they integrate play into their classrooms or learning environments. The range of the panel helped to highlight the importance of play in academics throughout the life and development of children. Not only does it support children in their development, it also acts as a way to help children through adverse childhood experiences.

The common thread running through each of the different education systems we analyzed seemed to be standards. The United States public education system continues to release demanding sets of standards. The more academic standards we introduce into the classroom, the less likely we are to leave room for play. In Rae Pica's book, she says "We talk so much about preparing kids for school but give very little thought to preparing schools for kids." This comment was with regard to the development process of the common core standards and the absence of people who understood child development in the process.

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The kindergarten in Fiji provided an exemplary example of how schools can be designed around the child. The 19th century classroom is not structured to support children. Instead, it is designed to control children. The kindergarten in Fiji capitalizes on core components of child development to completely integrate play into the education of children. This method is mirrored in the model of Pride Prep. Both schools understand developmentally appropriate ways to educate the young people they are designed to serve and they design the school around that. This provides better results than the alternative: build a school and encourage young people to fit in it.

The conversation in class last week excited me. It reminded me that there are alternatives to public education in the united states and, while we are not expending vast resources to improve education, nations around the world are dedicated to design an education system for it's original purpose: to support the social, emotional, academic and creative development of children.

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### *Sand Play Therapy*

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Play is an innate part of child and human development. It extends beyond emotional and social satisfaction and supports the overall growth and development of people. As a result, it makes perfect sense that play has a meaningful and practical role in therapy. In this instance, we learned about, practiced, and reflected on the power of sand play therapy.

The exercise started in our homes as we engaged in a creative process. For me, this process was graphic design. In conversation with my peers, I am aware that the focus on a computer made my creative process different in some ways and similar in other ways. For example, we all felt a feeling of timelessness. I however did not feel some of the physical relief and relaxation as my peers.

Next, the exercise encouraged us to find a small memento that was important to us. This had a unique impact on me. I am a minimalist. I throw a lot of things away. However, I noticed that the things that would help me in this exercise are the things I placed importance in. I had a hard time narrowing down my selection. Each item told a story. I learned that that was the criteria that lead me to keep these items in the first place. In the end, I selected a small wire animal photo frame that I purchased from a homeless man after a long day of adventure in San Francisco. To me, it reminds me of the joy I can feel when I am experiencing the flow of true play. In addition, it demonstrates to me that creativity does not have a price. No monetary value can make a person creative and that was truly inspiring to me. It is likely that this is the reason

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children place such importance on toys and transition items that mean nothing to the world around them. To that child, that blanket tells a story of comfort.

Prior to the conversation on sand play therapy, I had little to know base knowledge in the field. We discussed its cross disciplinary applications and learned the basics of facilitating a sand play therapy session. It's application in child life is obvious, but when we extend into education and even into educational development and training, it's applications are a bit more elusive.

After learning about the process, we had the opportunity to experience it from both sides of the equations. In the traditional timeline of play, I felt a strong sense of anticipation for this activity. However, the anticipation was much different than the anticipation I experienced before playing sticker tag or hot potato. Throughout the process I was reminded of the power of items and the stories that they tell. Again, we used items that tell a story to represent our story. This process was heavily inspired by the depth of our childhood and our developmental years. Had we never experienced Toy Story, it would be incredibly unlikely that we would choose Buzz Lightyear to enter our world. In an abstract way, this observation helped solidify the ways our adult life is shaped by our childhood. We have no reservations or objections to the thought of representing our life with army-men, cars, and dinosaurs.

As we embarked on the journey from beginning to end, Sand Play therapy demonstrated its vastly diverse applications. I immediately saw the opportunity to use Sand Play as a way to resolve work place frustrations or to address creativity blocks. My future involves supporting teams of adults to create a world that best supports the development of young people. It is fundamental to the futures of the young people that the adults I work with are inspired by youthfulness. I am confident sand play has a place in my future tool box and I am looking forward to using it to enhance my future academic and professional careers.

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### *Creative Play in Art and Music*

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Creativity is the lifeline of childhood exploration. Children utilize creativity to discover hobbies, role models, methods of success, and failure. Because childhood is a relatively modern concept, we are still learning ways to capitalize on this natural component of development to support the appropriate development paths of young people. In class this week, we looked at two therapy tools that utilize the natural creative nature of children to dig deep into their natural psyche.

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Adults and children alike are often afraid of art because they feel the defining nature of art lies in the final product. Instead, art as a therapy tool teaches us that the process is more important than the final product. Art affords an opportunity to escape to many people. Children often times do not have access to artistic expression. A primary example of this restriction is the hospital. Hospitals are not developmentally supportive environments for young people. In response, youth workers exert extra energy to ensure that children can have a developmentally appropriate experience in hospitals. A primary example of this is the implementation of art therapy in the hospital. Specialized employees can utilize tools to empower young people to tell a story through the process of creating art. With a simple basket of supplies, an art therapist can work with a student to understand what they miss about the “outside world” or what they like the most about being in the hospital.

We had the opportunity to try a traditional art therapy project in class on Tuesday. We each selected a mask and were given a plethora of supplies to customize our masks. The inside of our mask was to represent who we feel we truly are and the outside was meant to represent who we present to the world. My mask tells the world that I am a successful and creative leader. The mask reminds me that I am struggling with fear, anxiety, anticipation, and failure. The inside of my mask is cracked but the outside is exhaustingly perfect. “What If?” appears on both the inside and the outside of the mask. On the outside it simply tells the world I challenge the status quo. The inside empowers me to challenge my fears and anxieties. The reflection on this process affirmed its vast applications in the lives of young people.

Beyond art, people are extremely emotionally connected to music. We hear music and it brings up memories or feelings. Our conversation expanded in the second half of the class to include demonstrations and conversations of music therapy. Music therapy, contrastingly to art therapy, has both a performance component and a participation component. Both have practical applications in the lives of children. In hospital settings, we can use songs to better understand emotions children feel when they think about their hospital experience. We can use music as an anchor point for young people as well. We can introduce powerful musical tools to children in the hospital and when they are without a music therapist, they can employ the tools they learned. For example, a child undergoing regular procedures can learn a song that will make them understand the process and feel more comfortable. They may work with a music therapist to write and learn the song, but they can sing the song in the operation room without a music therapist.

Creativity is a common thread among all children. In fact, I believe it is a common thread among all people. As a society, we weed out creativity when we promote

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concrete productivity and scoff at creative expression. Children however have an innate desire to be creative in their play. This spark has not yet been extinguished. In response, it is our responsibility to support this spark and empower them to use the spark to take steps towards becoming their best selves.

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### *Play Therapy*

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Play is the language of children. It is how they communicate deep thoughts and emotions. Not only is play the language of childhood but it is also the way we measure development in the lives of children. These two factors make play a perfect medium for therapy.

Play therapy affords trained specialists and children a medium through which they can communicate on a deeper level than most children under the age of ten have the ability to communicate verbally. Similarly to sand play therapy, play therapy gives young people the opportunity to place meaning and emphasis on the toys they choose to play with and the discipline empowers child therapists to work with the child to interpret what they are communicating. In addition, play therapy has infinite opportunities for building rapport between therapists and children.

The rules of sand play stood out to me. While I understand all processes need guidelines and boundaries. It seems to me that if a therapist wanted to talk about anger or violent pasts, the best way to get to that with a child is to experience true anger with them. Many children express anger by damaging toys or acting aggressively. It seems as though restricting their experience to exclude acts of anger would reduce the likelihood of exploring anger based trauma. That being said, the conversation with the play therapist helped me to understand that each child is treated uniquely and alternate options are available. For example, she mentioned if a child has a hard time following indoor guidelines the session can be relocated outside to best support the therapeutic process of the child.

In addition to helping children understand and work on psychological challenges, play therapy also has preventative opportunities. Play, during a time of trauma, has the opportunity to reduce the reflective stress for years to come. In the age of technology, research has been done that suggests playing 15-20 minutes of visually simulating and simple mobile games after a traumatic experience can drastically reduce the likelihood that the person will

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experience PTSD in years to come. While its military applications are obvious, I think this concept also has numerous applications in the field of play therapy. The research does suggest playing immediately after a traumatic experience. This tool would have to exist outside of the therapist's office as more times than not students will experience trauma when they are not in their counselor's office. The exception to this rule is school counselors. If a student is being bullied, rather than relive the experience over and over again, they could visit the counselor's office and play to suppress the memory.

Play is an integral part of development. Children naturally use it to communicate. We as adults have an undying desire to do to children what is best for adults. This may be an effort to better prepare them for adulthood. The fact is, research tells us that doing what is developmentally appropriate to help children develop is far more effective. In fact, doing anything to rush development has been observed to slow down the developmental process. Play is a naturally part of childhood. It is much more comfortable to people between the ages of 3 and 12 than discussing emotional distress brought about by abuse or neglect. To best serve the psychological needs of children, we need to integrate more developmentally appropriate styles of therapy into the offices of counselors and therapists that work with children.

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### *Play Inclusion and Adaptive Recreation*

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Today, children face many barriers in their play. These barriers may be physical, emotional, societal, or even psychological. What is interesting though is the actual barrier itself. Physical disabilities, for example, are not as large of a barrier as society would like us to think that they are. If society offers XYZ options for play and a person in a cast can't play in that way, we are quick to assume they can not play. Instead, when we work with them to discover alternate avenues that reach true play potential, we discover there are many ways to play beyond the XYZ parameters.

Parasport Spokane demonstrated the power of the brain to create barriers after society has presumed them. Once society sees a child in a wheel chair, it is really hard for the child to see through all of the preconceived notions society has developed. However, if the young person can break through, the potential is immense. They too have the capacity to achieve greatness.

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In our conversation about ability and its relationship with play, I had three primary takeaways. The first: not all disabilities are identical. In the United States, we have an undying desire to place things in boxes full of other things. The way we as a society view people with disabilities is no different. Unless we have the ability to talk to a professional, it is likely that we will group cognitive and physical disabilities in the same box. However, these disabilities are vastly different and deserve to be treated differently. All children need to experience inherently beneficial play. To support children in this journey, we need to be aware of their unique situation and the appropriate ways to uniquely support them.

The second takeaway from the conversation deals with standards. For me, this is a new vantage point on a topic I have considered for years. What are the advantages of standards? This conversation brings me back to societies expectations. When the collective looks at a person in a body cast or in a wheel chair, our expectations are immediately lowered. While an internal locus of control is powerful, it is important to be able to see the influence of the world around us. The 8-year-old in a wheel chair can only ignore the overwhelmingly low standards and focus on the inspiration within for so long. As soon as we start believing that disabilities are not reason to reduce standards and instead are reason to change standards, we will be one step closer to supporting the development of all children.

Finally, the last takeaway I had from the conversation focuses on the power we give labels in the field of child development. It may be a child with ADHD stamped across their forehead that we immediately disregard the second they enter the classroom enthused on the first day of school. Or it may be a child amputee that we engage in gentle conversation with for fear of discussing an activity they “can’t do”. Once we see a label on a child, we find ways to apply it to every single aspect of their life. However, we know that a physically altering surgery has no bearing on a child’s desire to succeed, and a behavior deficit has no influence on the intelligence of the toe-headed kid in the front row of our classrooms.

To conclude, societies level of influence in what our children are capable of is overwhelmingly disheartening. While every child experiences struggles, what really prohibits proper development are the barriers raised by society in the way of a child with a disability. We instantly lower standards when we see a child wheeling themselves down the road because we immediately give their disability power to run their lives. In fact, children are so much more than any one part of them. To promote proper development, we need to acknowledge the power of labels, thoughtfully raise standards, and afford unique support to each child.

### *Movement in Play*

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Telling a child to play without moving is like telling a car to drive without wheels. Movement is the lifeblood of children's play. With movement, children can communicate and articulate feelings. This can be done through formal movement or informal movement. We as college students, had the opportunity to work with a movement coach and bond with one another in a deep and emotional way.

For most of us, the movement exercise went through several phases. At first, the movement was pretty awkward and uncomfortable. I had certainly never been taught how to move in an expressive way. After the awkward phase had somewhat subsided, I noticed most of the students took the opportunity to explore on their own. We broke down wall while working independently. Next, we began breaking down the walls between us and our peers. We transitioned from shy independent play, to empowered independent play, to shy group play and eventually to empowered group play. This part of the day was incredibly empowering. By the end of the exercise I felt strong and encouraged to be more conscious of the way movement impacts my daily life for better or for worse.

Before the movement exercise, we had the opportunity to think about actions we would take in the next week that bring us joy. The activity I thought about was one of my favorite past times: drive to a field at night and lay on the roof of my car and watch the stars. I ended up receiving a chip that encouraged me to walk through a garden. In addition, I ended up seated at a card that instructed me build a fort. Both of these actions were empowering for incredibly different reasons. Walking through a garden in the end of February is a filled with anticipation. The old corpses of last year's flowers have been removed and the beds have been filled with nutrition for the next generation of plants. Building a fort is enjoyable for a different set of reasons. It allows me the opportunity to express my creative side in real time. For a moment, I am a humanoid version of a 3D Printer. Each of these experiences were united by their concept of time. When we walk through gardens, build from the ground up, and move to a rhythm we do not bind ourselves with time. Instead, we forget time and submerge ourselves in the process. Being focused on the process is what allows us to lose track of time.

In the life of a child, so much of their life revolves around processes and losing track of time. That is until they enter traditional public education. We focus on ingraining into them an unnatural clock with bells and doors. We succeed at this so much so that kids have nightmares about deadlines and failed grades. The alternative of which is dreams about learning

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and processes not bound by time. As more and more schools shift to a project based learning atmosphere we will see students shift their emphasis away from high-stakes testing and towards high-stakes learning.

On a visceral level, dance has terrified me since middle school. I have not felt free dancing through childhood, adolescence, or my early adult life. This is because I was focused on the product of dance and not the process. This past week, I was reminded that dance and movement can be empowering when the focus is on the process. This acts as a perfect metaphor for the most significant problem in education today. We treat the product as more important than the process. We tell students “test days” are the most important days of their academic career when in fact every other day is far more important. In education, we need to shift our focus to learning and in movement we need to shift our focus to the process.

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### *Risk in Play*

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As the concept of childhood has evolved from it's risky origin in factories in the early 1900's we may have overcorrected in our attempt to raise our children in a safe environment. What we as child specialists call “risky play” today was simply called play even as little as 20 or 30 years ago. I believe this overcorrection is a risky overstep in the wrong direction.

Children's play is formally or informally restricted in so many ways. The basic playground today is designed to encourage children to play in three ways: climb, slide, and swing. We know that any play moderated by adults is not authentic play. In order for play to be authentic with adult involvement, the adults must be specifically trained to support youth play only when requested and do so in a way that promotes developmentally appropriate play exploration.

The concept of free and authentic play is what lead to the creation of the category of play known as adventure play. It is worth noting that just a few decades ago, this field of play existed without needing an entire field dedicated to it. Even more relevant, today in development nations around the world “adventure play” exists without society intentionally providing the opportunity. This further solidifies the idea that children know what is best for children and often adult intervention can mean a giant leap backwards for the development of the child. Moving forward, adventure play is a category of play where children are encouraged to explore risk at their own pace and by their own means. This is how children played for centuries and it ensures that the play they are engaging in is inherently developmentally appropriate.

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In adventure playgrounds, a physical representation of adventure play, an environment is created that provides young people the opportunity to design their own play world with loose parts tools and adult support if requested. These places afford young people the opportunity to have their own world in a world where every space is designed by adults for adults. The young people can create a complete space collaboratively or independently and they can explore risk with fire, water, and sharp tools. Adventure playgrounds are the much more effective counterpart of the traditional playground of today.

The process of exploring risk in childhood has devolved over the last century. We now encourage children to simply avoid risk because adults know what is risky and adults are always right. This avoidance of risk does not teach children proper risk management skills and it does not empower young people to call upon their peers when they need help. Instead it encourages risky behavior as a means of child parent anarchy (a much less safe way to explore risk) and it encourages young people to rely on their parents and the adults around them for support. In my opinion, this is one of the factors contributing to the helicopter parent phenomena. Beyond physical risk, the way we handle societal risk in education is significantly misguided. We direct the majority of our resources to promote curriculum such as “stranger danger”. Unfortunately, “stranger danger” is not effective at empowering young people to maneuver the societal risks of today. We know that the majority of child abductions are instigated by people who know the child. Furthermore, many strangers in a child's world are incredibly helpful. When we teach stranger danger to our children, we are teaching them to trust the cousin that is more likely to assault them in their life. In addition, we are teaching them not to trust the doctor, fireman and police officers in their lives who are there to support them and keep them safe.

Playgrounds are designed to subdue children while adults enjoy a city park and risk management curriculum is more focused on risk avoidance than it is on management or reduction. These two societal decisions are the result of a lack of representation of people who understand child development on decision making panels. If we truly want to empower our young people to live independent and healthy lives, we must reconsider the world children engage in and the way that world is designed to support adults and subdue children.