

The Professional



A Newsletter for the Early Learning and Care Professional, Creating a Bridge Between Research and Practice in the Field

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Make Mistakes Please!

By: Barb Mckee, RECE



"In school we learn that mistakes are bad, and we are punished for making them. Yet, if you look at the way humans are designed to learn, we learn by making mistakes. We learn to walk by falling down. If we never fell down, we would never walk."

— Robert T. Kiyosaki

As our profession evolves (and by the way, this is not a new phenomena) we as educators of young children are now being asked to look at ourselves and reflect on what we learn and how we feel. Why? Because what we do comes out of what we believe. Beliefs follow core values, what really matters to you? If we simply act out of our own gut, our biases, our beliefs; then our way of interacting with children will not change. How many of us have really sat down and thought about who we are and what influences us.

Really, lets face it, even if we drive ourselves (and everyone around us) crazy, we cannot and never will be perfect. The media has created an illusion that we have bought into and it is taking away our humanity.

We have all seen the child who tentatively puts pencil to paper and draws a few weak lines, then in frustration crumples up the paper, puts it in the garbage and walks away from the experience before he ever takes the first steps toward creating something of his own. Is this fear of imperfection?

We know the mom who spends hours drilling her two year old to perform to the standards that she believes "the world" has set, until her child recognizes the numbers put in front of her and can obediently repeat them. Yet we know that when we show her two objects she does not understand the value of two. Moving from concrete to abstract requires manipulation of materials, this is just one of the values of play.

What about the five year old who desperately wants to play four square and win, even though he is playing with others who are much older. The game usually ends with a meltdown for this child. As practitioners we need to come along side of the children and give them tools to develop and problem solve within the group of children they are with. Winning is not the only object here, although this child has been taught that this is most important.

If we are more concerned as educators about the way the craft we have set out meets the "Hallmark standards" for Valentine's day than we are about the child's experience in a pro-



cess, we may want to examine our own beliefs about what we are doing. We too have bought in to much of what we see and hear around us.

We must be aware of this, in order to facilitate and support our children as they construct their world through play.

So with this in mind, we as educators need to embrace mistakes, not fear them. This challenges us at our deepest levels. Are we willing to be vulnerable? Are we willing to admit that we were wrong about something? Can we share our mistakes and what we have learned from them? This requires first acknowledging that we are not in control. We need to stop polishing our image and trying to impress. We need to be honest about who we are and let go of any false images. Believe me when I tell you, you have value as you are and you will be accepted with your flaws.

This needs to happen first within ourselves, then with our peers and managers and with our parents. Finally we need to help children in our care em-

brace a culture of real humanity, where we all fail and learn, and fail and learn again, perhaps many times over. Watch a toddler as she takes her first steps, it is true; she will fall. We fear what can or may go wrong, yet we cannot protect our children from every hurt, nor should we. As I quoted at the beginning, she must fall before she ever can be free to walk and run. Imagine the life of that child if she was kept in a playpen so that she was safe and never allowed out.

We live in an increasingly regulated society fearful of being blamed, maybe even legally for the most basic of accidents. We are quick to soften our stance on what is good for children when an irate mother threatens us. So we make rules to avoid mistakes. If we continue in this pattern we will lose our right to choose what we share with children, we stop supporting play that has real value for fear it may cause problems for us. We must accept risk to gain freedom. Moving away from this mindset requires a paradigm shift in thinking. Let's look at the other side of the coin. Let's embrace hope and expectation and learn to take more risks.

Miriam Webster defines mistakes this way; "to understand (something or someone) incorrectly; to make a wrong judgment about (something); or to identify (someone or something) incorrectly".

We are limited by what we do not know and understand, what we judge wrongly, and what we identify incorrectly. But we do not automatically know what we do not know,. We do not understand what we have not experienced. We judge base on our own values, which may or may not be valid for others. We are faced with having to prove what we do is right.

It stands to reason then that to correct or learn from our mistakes we will broaden our understanding, look at new ways of making judgments and learn to identify things or people based on many different world views and many different ways of being.

Sir Ken Robinson has studied education both in the British culture and in the United States. He has identified some of the flaws in our system that hold us back. For example he talks about standardized testing; he acknowledges that tests are necessary, but if their purpose is simply to show who is right and who is wrong they do us a disservice. Tests must be diagnostic, that is they show us where the misunderstandings or incorrect knowledge is so that we can address it, and develop understanding.

I have worked in the field of education for over thirty years and I am always surprised when I see how devastated adult learners are when they are tested either through

assignments or tests and exams and they do not get a perfect mark. They are stressed out, they fear mistakes, they see a less than perfect mark as a judgment instead of an opportunity to see where they can improve their understand-



ing. I want to encourage you instead to embrace your mistakes, we are formed by our own understanding and understanding is based not on a head full of factual knowledge but rather on the accumulation of experience that you have acquired through the practice of your craft. Drawing simple lines on a paper over and over develops into an art, a mastering of mistakes through practice, reflection and repetition. A great athlete is not born that way, it takes years of practice.

So please make mistakes, admit them, embrace them and learn from them, and invite children to do the same. Let them learn that they will improve with practice, document their growth, and support their struggles to gain understanding, and dexterity. Help them

to know that they are accepted for who they are not what they do. We could never truly appreciate the beauty of life around us without the struggle it takes to live it.

“Let us cry for the spilt milk, by all means, if by doing so we learn how to avoid spilling any more. Let us cry for the spilt milk, and remember how, and where, and why, we spilt it. Much wisdom is learnt through tears, but none by forgetting our lessons.”

— María Amparo Ruiz de Burton,

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Learning thro



ugh Play?!?



Found on Learnquebec.ca by an unknown author, revisions by Cindy Bernier

What's Cooking ?



Frozen Yogurt Pops

Submitted by: Anna Shirokova & Wagdy Basily



Enjoyable Spring Recipe that is Easy to Make!

Ingredients:

- 1 8-oz. container of your favorite flavor of yogurt

Utensils needed:

- small paper cups
- wooden popsicle sticks (available in craft stores)
- plastic wrap



Directions:

1. Pour yogurt into paper cups. Fill them almost to the top.
2. Stretch a small piece of plastic wrap across the top of each cup.
3. Using the popsicle stick, poke a hole in the plastic wrap. Stand the stick straight up in the center of the cup.



Physical Activity

A growing need for children

By: Chris Dietrich and Kerri Wilson, Nursing Students, Conestoga College

Finding time to get enough physical activity and exercise is of huge Importance for people of all ages. It does a great deal in improving the overall health of every individual. “It reduces stress, strengthens the heart and lungs, increases energy levels, helps you maintain and achieve a healthy body weight and it improves your outlook on life” (Health Canada 2011). It is sometimes hard to find the time to partake in physical activity but Health Canada encourages people to try and integrate it into their everyday lives whether it be at home, school, work, or during play. Not being physically active can be very harmful, “research shows that physical inactivity can cause premature death, chronic disease, and disability” (Health Canada 2011). Since regular activity and exercise is crucial to growth and development, it is of greater importance for children to focus on it. The number of healthy children is declining each year. In current times it is not uncommon to see children spending their time watching TV or engaged in video games. This can take away from the time they could be using for physical activity and play outdoors. “On a typical Saturday or Sunday a quarter of children aged two to 15 spend at least six hours being inactive...these figures are a warning that many of our children are in grave danger of developing coronary heart disease in the future if they continue to live the same lifestyle” (Osborne, 2013). To prevent these things from happening, everyone needs to take on an encouraging role to help these children become more physically active.

Early childhood educators are vital in assisting and encouraging these children to perform physical activities and exercise. Since we cannot force the children into physical activity or exercise we must find ways to encourage the children to want to do it. The first specific example of an activity an early childhood educator

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the children to want to do it. The first specific example of an activity an early childhood educator can help to encourage is dancing. The early childhood educator could find a collection of age appropriate, popular songs that the children would feel comfortable dancing to. They can also begin dancing themselves and by modeling these behaviours to the children it may help them to want to dance as well. Dancing is beneficial to the children because it helps

Join the Network that

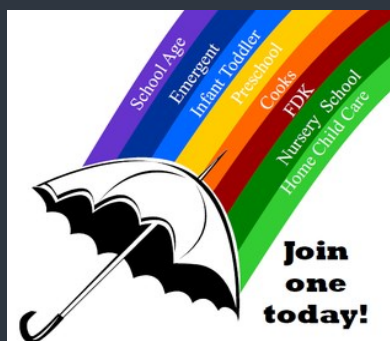
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- Infant & Toddler Network
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- Preschool Network
- School-Age (YDP) Network

Upcoming Network Meetings

Visit www.eceprc.ca for more information on these networks and current events.

Upcoming network meeting will be posted under the community calendar.



improve fitness, strengthens heart, bones and muscles, facilitates healthy growth and development, improves posture and improves the overall self-esteem of the children while lowering stress levels (Public Health 2012).

Another activity the Early Childhood educator (ECE) could assist with is hopscotch. The ECE could draw a hopscotch game on the pavement for the children to have access to. He/she can demonstrate to the children how to play and once the demonstration is completed, the children will then have free access to the game and can play as they wish. The game of hopscotch has plenty of benefits for a child. It advances physical coordination, balance, and cognitive development including muscle strength.

Children enjoy being outside and engaged in physical activities at a young age. It is important to ensure they remain active to contribute to their overall health and wellbeing. Jolly jumping is a game that includes skipping ropes. The ECE could demonstrate the use of the skipping rope and encourage the children to use the skipping ropes. The children would have open access to the skipping ropes and can jump and play whenever they desire. Skipping rope for children has great benefit.

It increases cardiovascular health (increase oxygen and blood flow to body and heart) manages weight, encourages weight loss if needed, and increases muscle tone (Moving Smart, 2012).

Riding a bike can be fun for a

child but can also contribute to a child's health and wellbeing. The ECE can ensure that children have access to bicycles all day during their play. The children may ride the bike as they desire. Riding a bike is a low impact exercise, and it stabilizes emotions, improves stress levels, improves longevity and elevates mental focus (Alberta Education, 2012).

In conclusion, physical activity is important to a child's health and wellbeing. Early childhood educators play an important role in motivating a child to include physical activity into their daily lives. If ECE's continue to contribute and excite the health of a child, health benefits will rise and obesity rates along with physical inactivity will become an element of the past.

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What's New in Childcare?

Links to the News in Early
Learning and Care

Recently in the news, Ontario has been considering making changes to the current Ontario Child Care Regulations Act. Most educators are concerned and nervous about these changes. A list of related news stories and links to the full articles are noted below:

[Ontario Plan Puts Child Care Quality at Risk, Experts Warn](#)

Source: Thestar.com Jan, 24, 2014

[Proposed Changes to Ontario Child care regulations will harm quality](#)

Source: www.cupe.on.ca
Feb, 2014

[Ontario's All-Day Kindergarten Classes Overcrowded, teacher say](#)

Source: The Globe and Mail,
Feb. 28, 2014

[Safe and Affordable daycare starts with better policy](#)

Source: The Globe and Mail,
March 17, 2014

[Open-Ed: Ontario's child-care changes create new challenges](#)

[Act, 2013](#)

Source: www.ottawacitizen.com
Ontario, March 17 2014

[Construction Setbacks hit Full-Day Kindergartens in Ontario](#)

Source: The Globe and Mail,
March 20, 2014

Looking for Leaders

The Umbrella Networks of Waterloo Region are looking for professionals who are seeking an opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills and further develop their own reflective practice while engaging in mentoring and collaborative approaches with other likeminded professionals. Currently we are in need of leaders for the following networks: Emergent, Preschool, and FDK. If you think this would be of interest please contact Debbie Jones at djones@regionofwaterloo.ca or Samantha Burns at Sburns@conestogac.on.ca for more information.

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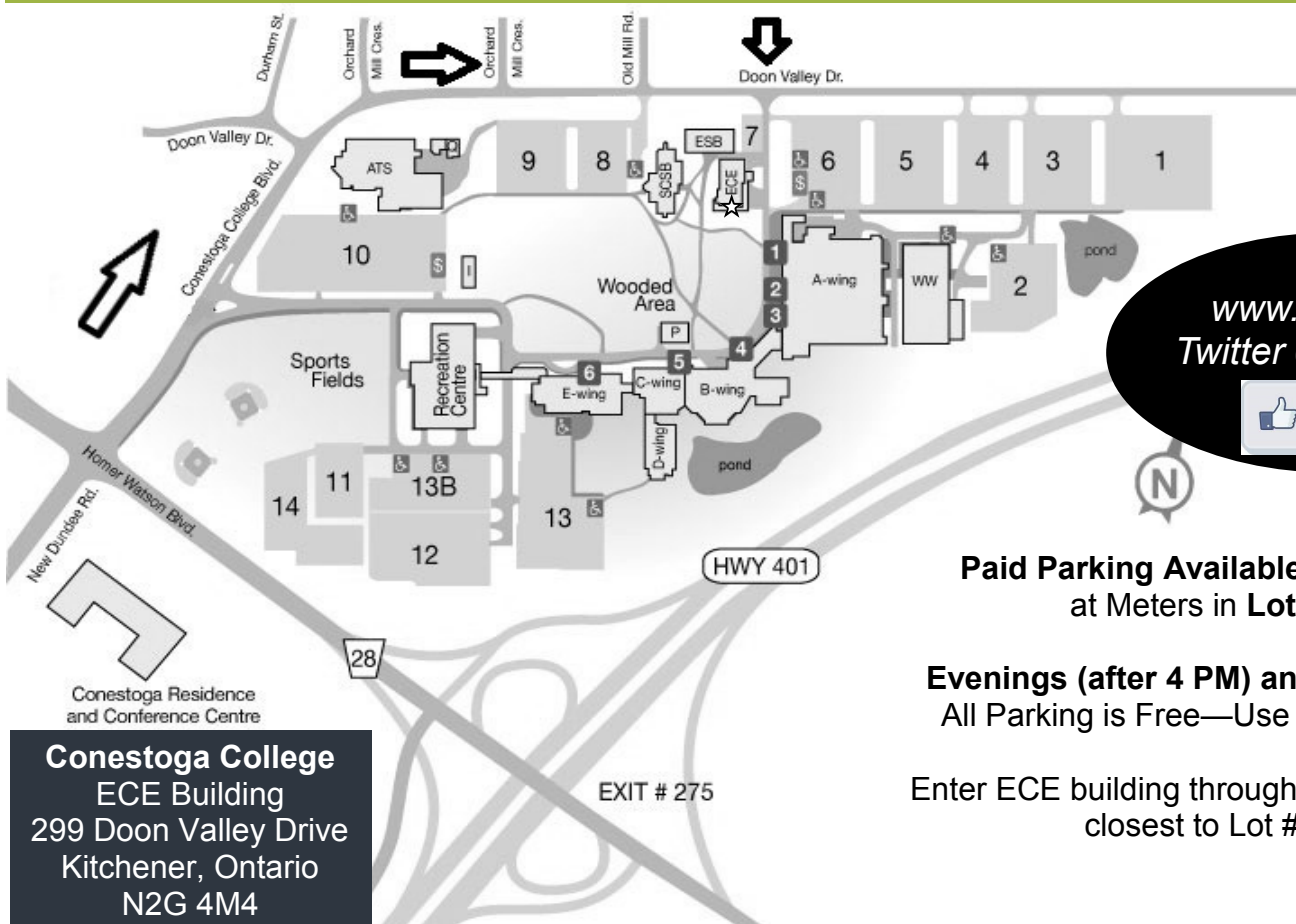


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