Embracing Risk-Friendly Learning

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Agenda

➢ The CREATE Framework

➢ Growth Mindset: Setting the Stage for Risk

➢ Risk-Friendly Learning
Our mission is to transform research into early learning experiences that inspire creative problem solving.
https://bayareadiscoverymuseum.org/resources/publications
OUR MISSION: to ignite and advance creative thinking for all children
Child-directed environments allow children to take charge of their own learning
Child-Directed

- Intrinsic Motivation
- State of Flow
- Guided Play
- Planning & Reflection
Learning and creativity require risk-taking.

R = Risk-Friendly
Risk-Friendly

- Emotionally Attuned
- Appropriate Challenge
- Growth Mindset
- Novel Experiences
Children are naturally wired to explore the world around them and to build their understanding through play.

(Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006)
• Playful Experimentation
• Hands-on Learning
• Open-ended
• Divergent & Convergent Thinking
Physical movement and exercise not only strengthen our bodies, but also enhance learning and boosts creativity.
• Opportunities for Movement
• Physical Development
• Brain Breaks
Research supports an important link between early childhood imagination and later creativity (Russ, 2003).

T = Time for Imagination
Time for Imagination

- Pretend Play
- Imaginary Worlds
- Daydreaming
- Explicit Instructions to Be Creative
Making connections and combinations, between different disciplines, topic areas, and ideas, is a vital creative practice.
Exchange of Ideas

- Conversation
- Connections & Combinations
- Collaboration
Growth Mindset
Growth Mindset

Graphic by Nigel Holmes (Mindset, p. 245)
Growth Mindset

If you have to work hard, you’re not smart

Working harder makes you smarter

Fixed Mindset

Growth Mindset
Praise Process

Fixed Mindset

You must be really smart!

Growth Mindset

You must have worked really hard!
Neuroplasticity

You can change your brain by growing more connections among neurons.
Neural pathways grow like forest pathways
Teach Neuroplasticity & Growth Mindset

*Your Fantastic Elastic Brain*
By JoAnn Deak, Ph.D.
Illustrated by Sarah Ackerley

*The Magical Yet*
FullPath: Lorena Alvarez

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“I’m struggling!”
The Case For Risky Play

- Children **will** engage in risky play
- Keeping them safe means allowing them to take risks
- Risk-taking builds the ability to assess and manage risks
Risky Play

• Great height
• High speed
• Dangerous elements (water, trees)
• Rough & tumble play
• Ability to disappear/get lost
Benefits of Risky Play

- Decrease in depression and anxiety
- Better competence with perceiving and assessing risk
- Better physical health
- Increase in self-esteem
- Stronger social competence
- Improvement in conflict resolution skills
The Risk-Deprived Child

Is more likely to experience:

- Depression & anxiety
- Obesity
- Lack of independence
- Decrease in learning, judgment & perception
- Weaker motor abilities
- Inability to cope with fear
- Abnormal physical & mental development
“IF YOU DON’T FALL HOW ARE YOU GOING TO KNOW WHAT GETTING UP IS LIKE.”

- Stephen Curry
Risk Competence

When encountering a risk, either:

1 - engage
2 - transform
3 - choose not to engage
Adult Influence

- Culture
- Type of setting
- Gender
- Age
- Individual personality & interest
Examples of Risky Physical Play

Reflect on photos on each of the 5 upcoming slides:

• What do they make you think about?

• Where do you see the risks?

• What reactions do you have?

➢ Complete the Poll about your reaction following each slide
Example of Risky Physical Play #1
Example of Risky Physical Play #2
Example of Risky Physical Play #3
Example of Risky Physical Play #4
Example of Risky Physical Play #5
Other Types of Risky Play
Emotional Health and Learning

Sensory intakes

Amygdala

Thinking, Reflective Brain

NO STRESS

Reactive Brain

Fight, flight, freeze

STRESS

(Willis, 2010)
Emotional Health and Learning

Image source: https://i.pinimg.com/564x/ca/16/d7/ca16d76a2decc397630fdd082cc78f35--emoji-faces-smiley-faces.jpg
Appropriate challenge level

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)
Novelty develops flexible thinking
Encouraging risk-friendly learning in your programs

- Cultivate a growth mindset in yourself and others
- View mistakes or challenges as a part of learning
- Teach about the brain and its plasticity
- Educate yourself and others about the necessity and benefits of risky play
- Examine your own influence on children and their families
- Provide an emotionally safe space for children
- Introduce novel materials, combinations, and experiences
Encouraging risk-friendly learning in your programs

When designing learning experiences, consider:

✓ How does your library, space, signage or programming communicate to children and families that trying new things, and even failing is encouraged?

✓ How will you create emotional safety for children and families to ask questions and try new things?

✓ How will you differentiate your activities or facilitation to reach children at different developmental levels?

✓ Where are there opportunities for children to try new things?

✓ Where do you anticipate children experience “failure” or difficulty? What strategies will you use to support them to persist?
Risk-Friendly

You’ll know the program is risk-friendly if:

• Children experience failure and try again

• Children say: “I’ve never done this before!” or “I tried something new today!”
Still Curious?

https://bayareadiscoverymuseum.org/resources/educator-resources/library-toolkit
Thank you!

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