



Curriculum Matters

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From the Editor.....



Dear Readers,

Wishing each and every one of you a very happy 2019!

We are back again with yet another issue focussing on “**Curriculum Matters**”. The first article by **Gauri Vanikar** stresses on the importance of positive playful experiences and its role in fostering holistic development in the child. To Gauri, children's play is a serious business. She is saddened by the denial of play opportunities for children in today's so called resourceful classrooms. Simple ideas to include play even in “resource-strapped schools” is a superb take home for all readers.

We all know the famous saying “As the twig is bent, so is the tree”. This reiterates the fact that the early years of an individual especially the first two to three years are extremely crucial. This issue also features a report of the power-packed workshop on the importance of brain development in the early years by **Dr. Vibha Krishnamurthy**. The magic of the first three years need to be unfolded by responsive parenting, understanding the critical concepts of child development, appreciating the importance of language learning and knowing more about parent-child attachment.

We also present a peek into the workshop that was conducted by **Shobha Bharat** on Developmentally Appropriate Programs (DAP) for Children. The KBC of DAP i.e., Knowing the children, Building relationships and Creating the Learning Environment were emphasised upon very well. The activities galore made the participants understand age appropriateness, individual appropriateness and cultural appropriateness in all its dimensions.

The **National Conference** on Every Child's Right to Early Childhood Development: Evolving Inclusive Practices at Delhi on 23-24th November, 2018 was truly one of a kind. We bring to you the excerpts of this meaningful conference that brought in multiple stakeholders responsible for the whole child together.

Optimal learning experiences can be provided to children only by a trained teacher. **Sound Bytes** present the views of Teacher educators, Principals and Coordinators of schools on the role of training. Voices of these experts reflect the need of the hour.

Book Nook is a treat for book lovers. With inclusion being the mantra for us at AECED, **Alka Deshpande** has set sail to bring in reviews of two beautiful stories for children that aim to develop sensitivity, empathy and understanding. “Thupka for All” is a touching story told in the perspective of a visually impaired child from the beautiful land of Ladakh and “A Home of our Own” brings in the myriad feelings experienced by Biswa, the child of a migrant worker who feels lost in a city.

The mixed bag of articles in this issue reinforce one important factor which is that of the whole child. “Children are like wet cement, anything that falls on them creates an impression”. Let us together create the right impressions on the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic and moral development of the whole child.

We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed making it.

Happy reading,

Regards,

Vidhya Satish

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Let my playing be my learning, my learning be my play

- *Pedagogy of Play*



- Gauri Kirtane Vanikar

When one googles the 'importance of play', one of the first quotes that comes up is, "Play is the highest form of research". This is just one amongst a score of others by educators, psychologists, artists and scientists who all emphasize the importance of play, especially in early childhood. There is a large body of research as well as entire pedagogies (such as Montessori, Reggio Emilia, emergent curriculum, activity based learning, etc.) based on play in early childhood. While it may not be intuitive to understand how blocks, puzzles and imaginary play tie into 'academic' learning, research in recent decades has shown that there is "increasing evidence that infants and children are constantly learning, connecting and engaging with their surroundings through positive playful experiences" (Lego Foundation, What We Mean by Learning through play, 2017). Play has been shown to enhance creativity, language development, thinking skills as well as socio-emotional development. (Fromberg and Gullo, 1992). Frost, 1992 also agrees that play is "the chief vehicle for the development of imagination and intelligence, language, social skills, and perceptual-motor abilities in infants and young children" (p. 48).



Play in preschool is not only about having fun. It is serious work for the children. Play provides children ongoing opportunities to practice and master different skills by themselves or alongside their peers in a safe environment. "Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth" (Ginsburg, 2013).

Play allows children to take risks, make mistakes and take ownership of their learning. It is a space to learn to interact with peers and adults, regulate emotions, negotiate, share and compromise. Play can be unstructured and free or guided by specific learning outcomes. It can be solitary, in pairs, or in a group. It can be block play, free play, outdoor play, art and expression or imaginary play. However it is critical for play to be a part of a preschool day.

Despite so much evidence on the role of play in early childhood learning and development, play is rapidly disappearing from our early childhood classrooms. The focus on content mastery and completing the syllabus coupled with space, resource and time constraints means that art, music and play are often given a lower preference and more commonly, simply dropped from the day's plan.

The one common rationale that may not often be articulated but implicitly underlies these reasons is the insufficient understanding of the critical role of play in early childhood. The school administration, teachers and most importantly, parent, need to understand how important play is for their preschoolers to develop optimally and stop denying them this opportunity to assimilate new learnings, practice and hone their skills in a safe environment.

The ASSET (2006) showed how children, even from prestigious education institutes in India were unable to apply learning to questions not based on rote. According to a report published in India Today,

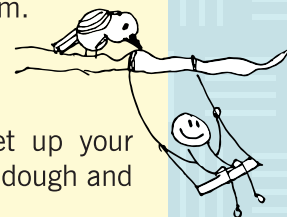
the alarming gap in student learning outcomes on the ASSET, can be attributed mainly to the focus on rote learning of content matter as opposed to real learning with understanding. "The consensus is that there needs to be a shift from facts to skill. Students need to develop skills to learn how to learn rather than simply having to memorize larger and larger syllabi" (<https://www.ei-india.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/India-Today-printable-November-27-2006-Whats-Wrong-With-Our-Teaching.pdf>). In the early years, where children learn best through hands on experience, social interactions and play, this shines the spotlight on the crucial role that play has in preschools as well as in elementary grades.

While resources and space can prove to be a challenge, there are several examples of play in "resource-strapped" schools to take inspiration from. Muktangan, a non-profit that works in partnership with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has equipped their preschool classrooms with a set of affordable, local and home-made materials that children can engage with. The resources range from specific fine motor materials to blocks to open ended resources for imaginary play. The children have an hour for play which is interestingly called work time - for that is what it actually is. An hour to do what they actively choose and plan to do, an hour to work alone or with peers, to practice newly acquired skills or hone earlier skills. There are several other examples of play being an integral part of the learning process in preschools.

Resources for play do not need to be fancy, expensive or store bought. Children naturally gravitate to play and the most important step to take is recognizing the importance and need for play in the preschool curriculum and day. It is time we stopped denying children this almost fundamental right to play for with it we are denying them the opportunity to truly understand the world around them.

Here are five simple ideas and suggestions to include play in your preschool classroom:

1. Have a slot of time at least a few times a week for free play. You can set up your classroom space with simple blocks, art materials, puzzles, books, puppets, play dough and some material for pretend/imaginary play.
2. Include free art and expression in your daily time-table. This can be a small chunk of time each day or can be used as a transition or for when children finish their work ahead of time
3. Engage in collaborative explorations with your children
4. Include time at least once a week for sand/water play. Use everyday resources likes cups, bottles, spoons and utensils to enhance the experience
5. Allow children time and space for some gross motor activities – this can be on the play-ground, in a hall, or in class through music and movement



It is important for us educators to recognize the importance of play in our children's lives and learning and ensure that it is an integral part of every preschool classroom.

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Gauri Kirtane Vanikar has a doctorate in Education from the University of Pennsylvania and is passionate about the early years in education. She has worked with the Akanksha Foundation managing their non-formal education centers and has helped set up the initial KG curriculum in Akanksha Schools. Gauri is currently working with FSG, a non-profit consulting firm, on their Program to Improve Private Early education (PIPE),

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:

Roots to Developmentally appropriate practices

The Early Years: Linking the Science to Skills

Resource Person: **Dr. Vibha Krishnamurthy**

Developmental Pediatrician Founder, UMMEED Child Development Centre

Dr. Krishnamurthy provided participants a brief overview on importance of early brain development and how the brain develops. Participants also reviewed key concepts of child development for children aged birth to 3 years and 3 to 6 years from the perspective of brain development. The importance of recognizing typical and atypical behaviors among pre-school children and WHY it occurs was also discussed. Participants were briefed about rapid pace of brain development in the early years and critical window of opportunity for brain development. Conception to 2 years show steepest curves for various areas of development. The resource person highlighted the importance of maternal and child nutrition for brain development in the context of current poor nutritional practices among pre-school children. Research indicates maternal anemia tends to affect attention and concentration levels among children.

Importance of Responsive Parenting- A brief discussion oriented participants towards responsive parenting and care giving. A responsive caregiver observes the child, infers cues, responds promptly and with warmth. Adverse effects of 'toxic stress' on brain development in absence of responsive care giving was discussed. In the absence of the responsive care giving, institutionalized children showed less brain activity compared to children in foster care. Principles of child development were briefly discussed and it was highlighted that despite the protection neuroplasticity offers, the first two years of life remain most important as steepness of learning curve is maximum in this early phase of life. While the pace of development varies from child to child, sequence of development remains the same. Another salient point was the importance of attachment – the special emotional bond between parent-child may begin before birth / weeks to months to develop. Disability of child, gender, postpartum depression, and unpreparedness to be a mother are some of the factors that may affect attachment process. Participants were introduced to attachment research, various attachment styles and separation – the process by which child establishes a separate identity. Participants then deliberated upon applications of attachment research to day-to-day preschool practices. Critical concepts in child

development for this age group were then discussed with the participants along with the implications for practice. A special emphasis was placed on play and importance of language development in pre-school years as language delays are often linked to reading and writing difficulties. Three aspects of language Expressive (language of production), Receptive (understanding language) and Interactive (social/pragmatic) were discussed. The resource person introduced Red flags which would draw the attention of the caretakers to delays in development.



Developmentally Appropriate Programmes for Children

Prof. Shobha Bharat,

Head of the department of Human Development, Smt. P. N Doshi Women's College.

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. It is a framework designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are, both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals (NAEYC, 2009).

Developmentally appropriate programmes are essential to reduce the achievement gap, provide comprehensive and an effective curriculum and enhance the teaching- learning process.

There are three core considerations of DAP.

- **Knowing about child development and learning.** Understanding what typical development and learning at different ages is, is a crucial starting point. This knowledge, based on research, helps us predict which experiences will support children's learning and development
- **Knowing what is individually appropriate.** What we learn about specific children helps us refine decisions about how to teach and care for each child as an individual. By continually observing children's play and interaction with the physical environment and others, we learn about each child's interests, abilities, and developmental progress.
- **Knowing what is culturally important.** We must make an effort to get to know the children's families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in their communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for each child and family.

In order to plan developmentally appropriate programs, the following steps are necessary-

- **Know the Children:** Children of different ages have different needs. To teach them well involves considering and fostering their development and learning in all domains. As the full spectrum of development and learning is fundamental to children's lives and to their future participation as members of society, early care and education must address all the domains. Teachers who are knowledgeable about child development and learning are able to understand what strategies and approaches will most likely promote their optimal learning and development. With this knowledge, teachers can make preliminary decisions with some confidence about environment, materials, interactions, and activities.
- **Build relationships:** It is essential to build warm, nurturing relationships with responsive adults which are necessary for many key areas of children's development, including empathy and cooperation, self-regulation and cultural socialization, language and communication, peer relationships, and identity formation. Children construct their understandings about the world around them through interactions with other members of the community (both adults and peers).
- **Love children unconditionally-** Adults need to listen to children, limit them, laugh with them and give them freedom to explore, play, discover, invent and be themselves.
- **Create the learning Environment:** A well planned, stimulating environment is necessary to promote holistic development. The environment as well as the curriculum should be interesting, integrated, sequenced, connected, engaging and comprehensive.

- **Plan the Curriculum:** In developmentally appropriate practice, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant. The curriculum does this through learning experiences (including play, small group, large group, interest centers, and routines).

Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices

- **a) Creating a caring community of learners** - Each member of the community is valued by the others. By observing and participating in the community, children learn about themselves and their world and also how to develop positive, constructive relationships with other people.
- **b) Teaching to enhance development and learning-** Developmentally appropriate teaching practices provide an optimal balance of adult-guided and child-guided experiences.
- **c) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals-** In DAP, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant. The curriculum does this through learning experiences (including play, small group, large group, interest centers, and routines)
- **d) Assessing children's development and learning-** Children differ in many other respects—including in their strengths, interests, and preferences; personalities and approaches to learning; and knowledge, skills, and abilities based on prior experiences. Children may also have special learning needs.
- **e) Establishing reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families-** There is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals. Early childhood professionals work in collaborative partnerships with families, establishing and maintaining regular, frequent two-way communication with them.

It is important to move out of academic subject based activities and place emphasis on planning activities that would be relevant to each child, culturally appropriate and build relationships with peers and communities around them to ensure holistic development.

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VIGNETTES - THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

"Every Child's Right to Early Childhood Development:
Evolving Inclusive Practices"

"All Children Together!"

23-24 November 2018

22 Nov 2018 Pre-Conference Activity
New Delhi



EXCERPTS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: EVOLVING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

This conference aimed at

- Understanding the role of Early Childhood programmes in addressing equity
- Documenting the best practices for both diversity and inclusion
- Bringing together practitioners, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, academia, policy makers and funding agencies to address inclusive practices.
- Considered issues of achievement and participation, roles and responsibilities of teachers and development of their skills and knowledge
- Build strategies that will create policies and practices that are inclusive in nature.

The **inaugural ceremony** enlightened the audience about the goals of the conference by Prof. Vrinda Dutta, CECED, Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD). Prof. Jatin Bhatt, AUD delivered the inaugural speech that was followed by an address by Prof. Salil Misra, AUD on the role of CECED as centre of the Ambedkar University, Delhi. The highlight of the inaugural ceremony was the keynote address on the Art and Science of Nurturing by Prof. Shekhar Seshadri of NIMHANS, Bangalore. The session was chaired by Prof. Venita Kaul, AUD.

Plenary sessions had eminent and renowned speakers who had carved a niche for themselves in the field of ECD. Their talks and presentations aided the participants to understand the various facets of the theme. The plenary sessions focussed on ECD through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals: ECD 2030 and Linking policy and practice. **Voices from the field** was a special session that acted as a platform to showcase innovative programs in ECCE field. **Concurrent workshops** brought to light the importance of gender inclusivity, meaningful engagements between parents of children with disabilities, curricular adaptation, role of early language and literacy, music for inclusion, dance for inclusion, and the art and science of parenting to nurture every child. A **campfire dinner** with traditional Indian music marked the end of the first day's proceedings. The conference also saw innovative **paper and poster presentations** on the second day.

The other interesting part of the conference was the pre-conference activities on **22nd November, 2018**. Participants could choose to be in a research workshop on data and evidence driven practice conducted by Dr. Rajani Konantambigi and Dr. Sujata Sriram, from TISS or could get to visit innovative educational institutions that offered high quality programs in early childhood care and education.

The conference brought together policy makers, teachers and teacher training institutes, academicians, NGOs and research scholars. Participants all across the country and also from the Sultanate of Oman attended the conference. The two day content-packed seminar ended on a high note. Senior ECD contributors were felicitated in an innovative ceremony by AECED. The way forward was discussed and the participants left with a smile on their faces, a heart filled with gratitude and compassion and a mind full of innovative ideas with inclusion as the primary thought.

SOUND BYTES – VOICES

From the field on the role of training

What is the role of effective teacher training in the field of Early Childhood Education?



Sarah D'Souza,

Senior Coordinator,
St. Gregorios High School, Chembur, Mumbai

Research has shown that the early years are crucial to a child's physical, cognitive and emotional development. What the child learns at this stage will determine his future behaviour to a large extent. There is an immense need for professionals who are well versed with the theoretical as well as practical components of child development. Training, therefore is a tool to empower individuals/ trainee teachers to understand the crucial role they play in shaping the mind of a child.

Mahalaxmi Anand,

Primary Coordinator,
Garodia International School, Mumbai.

I believe that a good quality teacher training program prepares a teacher on timely assistance and support for optimum growth and development in all areas, early detection and intervention in case of developmental delays, identifying gifted and talented children and help them tap their innate potential and inculcate habits and values at the right age.

Ms. Latha Raja M.Ed, PGDME,

Director of Wonderland Playschool and Nursery,
Chembur, Mumbai.

Though it is popularly believed that people working with young children require minimal training and at best need to be prepared to be fun loving, playful and caring towards children, it is important for a 21st century pre-primary teacher to be adequately qualified and experienced. Early childhood development programs should prepare pre-primary teachers to work with children from diverse backgrounds, develop the ability to use locally available resources, trigger self-development with emphasis on reflective practices and most importantly work with parents to build an understanding about appropriate practices.

Snehalata Ramachandran,

Principal, Indira Priyadarshini School,
J.P. Nagar, Bangalore

Training in Early Childhood Education is a win-win for both students and the teacher. At the early age, the tiny tots listen to the teachers more than anyone else. They are like sponges, just ready to absorb anything as it is absolutely new to them. Here lies the responsibility of the teacher to use the right content and appropriate techniques, that ensures a strong foundation. This will enable the students to get the right skills. Students will grasp and understand with ease when the right methodology is used. All this is possible only when the teacher learns the skills through effective training. Thus, teacher training is pivotal in skill set development of children.

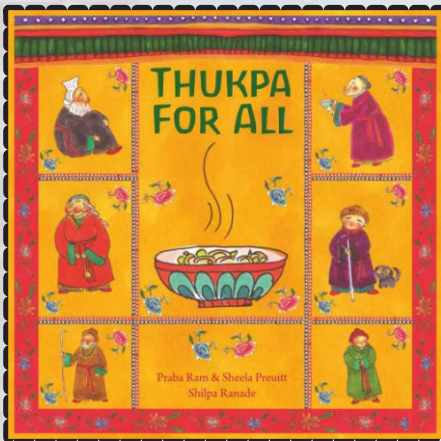
Suman Ananthnarayan,

Asst. Professor, Sree Narayana Guru College of Education, Chembur, Mumbai

A teacher is a nation builder, the professional who shapes every other profession. Just as any building needs a solid foundation to stand firm and weather every storm that comes its way, education of an individual too needs a strong foundation. This makes the early years a critical stage. An early childhood educator thus needs to be the skilled sculptor who is equipped with the right tools of knowledge, skill and education to help the young learner bloom as per his/her needs, readiness and interests. A proper training in Early Childhood Care and Education will help early childhood educators acquire in-depth knowledge, skills, competencies and qualifications that will help them to be confident, efficient, responsible and conscientious professionals.

THUKPA FOR ALL

by Praba Ram and Sheela Preuitt, Illustrations by Shilpa Ranade
Published by Karadi Tales Company



This engaging book, set in the remote valley of Ladakh, tells the tale of Tsering and the small community he lives in. Tsering craves his Grandma, Abi's, "thukpa" and on the way home decides to invite all his neighbours to join in and sample her delicious fare! The preparations are on full swing, when suddenly the lights go out and the house is plunged in darkness... what does Abi do? Is she able to make the thukpa? Will everyone get dinner?

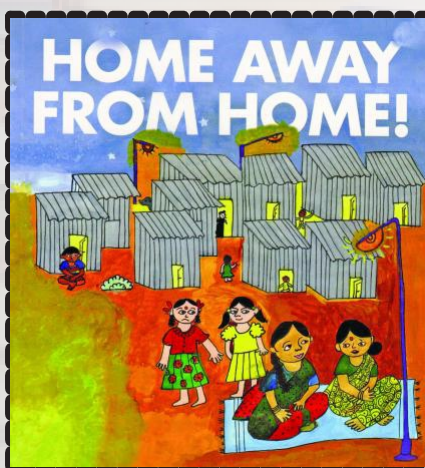
Told from the perspective of a visually impaired child, this tale is full of onomatopoeic words and vibrant illustrations that bring this delightful story to life. The simple yet detailed visuals give us a peek into what the terrain of far-away Ladakh and its people look like. One can almost smell the delicious thukpa as Abi goes about making it!! A story that will appeal to

children and adults alike, it unobtrusively creates understanding and awareness about visual impairment.

The book ends with a short write up on Ladakh, a glossary of local words and (as a yummy surprise) an easy to follow recipe for THUKPA!!

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

by Mumbai Mobile Creches
Published by Vakils, Feffer and Simons Pvt. Ltd



What is it like not to have a permanent home... to move to a new place very few months?

'HOME AWAY FROM HOME' tells the story Biswa who moves into the city from the village, along with his parents who are construction workers (Migrant labour). The story deals with feelings of loneliness, displacement, adjusting to a new environment, making new friends and bidding farewell to old ones. It also gives us an idea of what life on a construction site is like, the kind of houses workers live in, the work they engage in and, of course, how the children spend their day.

In the midst of all this, is Biswa who has a secret and Rabia and Jhimli who are trying to befriend the lonely boy. What is Biswa's secret? Why is stuff disappearing from home and the Centre? Will Rabia and Jhimli get Biswa to be their friend? This book deals with the real challenges that many young children face. Nevertheless, the story is narrated with empathy, humour and simplicity to create awareness in young children about other young children like themselves who may lead very different lives under very different circumstances.

The detailed text and vivid illustrations, reminiscent of colourful folk art, are modified versions of original artwork done entirely by the children of Mumbai Mobile Creches. Truly a book to be cherished!

Books reviewed by **Alka Deshpande**

Workshops 4

Title	Resource Person	Date	Venue
Maths in Early Years	Nilesh Nimkar	23.02.19.	Juhu Vile Parle Gymkhana, Plot No. U - 13, N.S. Road, J.V.P.D. Scheme, Juhu Scheme, Vile Parle West, Mumbai- 49

For further details click www.mumbaiaced.org

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4. D.D./Cheque/Cash can be couriered or hand delivered to Meera Mahendra 2A/104; Jal Tarang, A.S. Marg; Powai, Mumbai 400076.
5. NEFT in favour of AECED Mumbai; BANK OF INDIA; VILLE PARLE EAST BRANCH A / C NO. 004610110007460; IFSC CODE BKID 0000046. A soft copy of the transaction needs to be emailed clearly showing the member/participant's name.



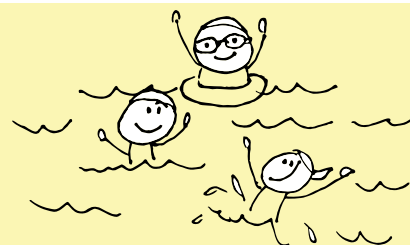
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