

## **Florida Play Symposium June 8, 2008**

### **PERSPECTIVE FOR DEVELOPING A STATEWIDE PLAY, POLICY AND PRACTICE INTEREST FORUM AS PART OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA (AEYC)<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Can We Play In An Age of Accountability?**

Most early childhood educators believe play is essential to helping children form early understandings about their world, develop mathematical and early literacy skills, and build social competence. Yet in many early care and education programs play is overlooked and undervalued.

#### **Addressing the Issue**

The ECA 2006 State Conference provided time and resources to conduct the First Annual Play Symposium. Ed Klugman, NAEYC's Play Interest Forum facilitator and co-founder of Playing for Keeps, led the "Play Symposium" which featured a series of hands-on workshops and open planning sessions on the importance of play in the lives of young children. NAEYC's Play Interest Forum is a learning community of concerned teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers that examine play from multiple perspectives.

"As early childhood educators we have a unique and important role in promoting emotional, intellectual, physical and social well being of children", comments Klugman. "It is important that we promote play strategies that will support children to be resilient, think creatively, and reduce excessive stress in their lives."

#### **Forming A Play Committee**

Klugman inspired affiliate participants saying, "My dream is to inspire play and to help NAEYC to become much more of an on-line community and Florida is the state that can pilot the effort by showing how interest forums can be nurtured and developed. I would like to encourage you and your Governing Board to work together with the NAEYC Interest Forum to generate an infra-structure within the Florida AEYC State unit for an ongoing group that would address play for children, families and the Early Childhood profession."

An exciting outcome of the symposium, which was organized and supported by the Institute for Self Active Education, Space Coast, South Florida, Lee and Collier County ECA/AEYC Affiliates, the ReThink and ReUse Center, the Florida Reusable Resources Network, was the formation of an initial committee to establish a Florida Play, Policy, Practice Interest Forum.

The work to establish a Play, Policy, and Practice Interest Forum within ECA of Florida began with the 2006 committee was revisited in September of 2007 at the ECA annual conference. The following prospectus was submitted for consideration by the ECA Board of Directors.

### **ECA OF FLORIDA PLAY, POLICY, & PRACTICE INTEREST FORUM**

#### **Vision:**

Respect and Safeguard the child's right to play.

#### **Mission:**

Support the child's right to play through Leadership, Advocacy, and Professional Development.

#### **Goals:**

1. Help Early Childhood Professionals understand and value how their own play experience influences their teaching practice.
2. Help Early Childhood Professionals develop the ability to observe, assess, and extend the process of play.
3. Help Early Childhood Professionals recognize and articulate how intentional teaching practices enhance and meet required Standards.
4. Advocate with a collective voice the value and importance of children learning through play.
5. Support the American Academy of Pediatrics position that play is essential to development as it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children.

#### **Plan of Action**

Form an ECA Committee of early childhood decision makers and play advocates within the state and invite them to serve for a term in creating a Play, Policy, and Practice Interest Forum. The NAEYC Play Policy and Practice Coordinator will identify 2 or 3 national mentors to work with the ECA committee.

ECA Committee identifies individuals from the following groups to serve on the State Play Policy and Practice Interest Forum:

- a. Leaders grounded in play theory and practice from organizations such as two and four year colleges and universities, early childhood settings including primary grades.
- b. Administrators, such as principals, school board members, superintendent, and center directors that support play in the educational program.

- c. Educational coordinators, such as curriculum support, VPK, Title 1, and professional development who are familiar with state standards and can relate them to a play curriculum.
  - d. State DOE representatives familiar with standards and certification.
  - e. Teachers from a play based early childhood program.
  - f. A technical facilitator who can set up a state-wide communication linking with NAEYC Play, Policy, and Practice, establish a list serve and develop a web site and chat room focusing on play. Julie Thornton, a Ft. Meyers early childhood teacher, volunteered to be the Florida technical facilitator to work with the NAEYC "Online Communities." Michele Rosen of Miami Dade also serves as a Florida facilitator.
2. ECA provides time and resources at their annual State Conference to conduct a yearly symposium on play. The content of the symposium would address national, state, and local information and educational on timely topics on children's play. The ECA's Play, Policy and Practice Interest Forum would develop a tentative three year plan on the goals of the three domains:
    - a. Play Theory- What are some of the new theoretical considerations?
    - b. Practice- What are the questions and concerns in the daily practice; what are the challenges and how are the addressed.
    - c. Policy- What are some of the local, state, and national policies relative to children's play that need to be addressed? What progress has been made? What are the new challenges that require policy statements?

**PLAY, POLICY & PRACTICE COMMITTEE**

In October of 2007 the ECA of FL Board of Directors accepted the proposal and appointed Walter F. Drew as Chair of a Play, Policy, & Practice Committee. This committee works under the Vice President of Professional Development, Sandy Crawford and several other ECA board members who expressed an interest in serving on this committee.

Initially, ECA of FL agreed to fund three conference calls the first year for the development and work of the committee. Play workshop slots will be allocated during the 2008 conference and meeting space will be provided for the play committee during the conference.

The Board directed Suzanne Gellens, ECA Executive Director, to change the ECA By-Laws to establish a Play, Policy and Practice Committee as follows:

**Charge**

- To work together with the NAEYC Interest Forum to address play for children, families, and the Early Childhood profession.
- To establish a Florida Play Interest Forum.

**Committee Composition**

- Any early childhood educator who believes play is essential to helping children form early understandings about their world, develop mathematical and early literacy skills, and build social competence.
- Representative of a broad spectrum of ethnicity, gender, early care industry and educational fields, educational and experiential backgrounds, and special needs.
- At least one representative from the ECA of FL Board will serve on the committee.

**Primary Functions**

- Write articles for ECA of FL publications including brochures on play (as needed).
- Keep affiliate members informed of the research and benefits of play.
- Arrange for workshops on play at the annual conference.
- Encourage members to advocate for play in early childhood classrooms.

**Members and friends of ECA who helped shaped the perspective:**

Sue Blandford	Sheila Bollinger
Louann Bruneau	Victoria Candelora
Connie Christman	Kim Cornell
Cathia Darling	Walter F. Drew
Amy Felt	Hugh Halsey
Rita Hewitt	Jody Samanich
Ed Klugman	Jenifer McKee
Michele Rosen	Pamela Phelps
Mona Potter	Zani Raney
Baji Rankin	Donald Sanker
Jean Smith	William Strader
Suzanne Gellens	Alice Taglauer
Julie Thornton	Linda Vinson
Shelly Welker	

<sup>1</sup> NAEYC PDI -Affiliate Council Meeting, June 8, 2008 submitted by Dr. Walter F. Drew

