

Professional Resource Centres

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An Informal Caregiver Is:

In the province of Ontario, you may provide care for up to 5 children under 10 years of age in addition to your own children at any given time in your home.

Example 1: If you provide care for 1 infant plus 2 preschool children during the day, you may also provide after-school care for 2 school-age children in addition to your own.

Example 2: If you provide care for 1 infant, 2 toddlers, and 2 preschool children during the day, you are at your maximum number of children; hence you cannot care for any additional school-age children after school. Should you wish to care for more than 5 children plus your own at any given time in your home, you would require to be licensed under the Ontario Day Nurseries Act and meet all of its regulations.

*The Professional Resource Centres are sponsored by different agencies in each of the four communities. Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) in Hamilton, the Early Childhood Community Development Centre in Niagara and the Ontario Early Years Centres: Brant and Haldimand & Norfolk provide these services in their respective communities.

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We are interested in hearing your comments. Your input is important to us to ensure we are providing information that is useful to you. Please feel free to contact us.

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Issue 1, 2015

a newsletter for Home-Based Caregivers

ECCDC Launches Newly Designed Website

Looking for Quiet Times on our new website? Home Child Care Professionals may find the Quiet Times Publication under the Coaching & Support tab. You may access the most current Quiet Times publication from the Quick Links on the right hand side of the page.

The ECCDC team is thrilled to announce the launch of our newly designed website. We're hopeful you'll have a more user-friendly visit as we have redesigned the website to be modern, streamlined and easy to navigate. The site allows us to highlight ECCDC's newly modernized service areas while introducing some entirely new and exciting features – all designed to better serve Niagara's early learning and child care community and beyond.



There are several areas which home child care professionals may find useful.

Under our new For Parents tab, home child care professionals will see how we share relevant information with parents regarding their options for quality child care in the Niagara Region. Interested in adding your Niagara Home-Based Child Care business to Parent Direct Niagara? Please contact your area coordinator for more information.

Under our new Lending Library & Workroom tab, home child care professionals can find information about Individual Memberships and search our Learning Materials Catalogue for resources available for borrowing. For those home child care professionals who are outside the Niagara Region, you will find a Quick Link to Learning Materials we have for sale on our e-store.

Under our new Professional Learning tab, home child care professionals across Niagara and beyond can access information about upcoming Professional Learning or Networking Opportunities.

We invite you to visit www.eccdc.org and browse around.

To look at websites in other communities please visit:
www.eycbrant.ca/oeyc (Brant)
www.hnreach.on.ca (Haldimand-Norfolk)
www.ascy.ca (Hamilton)

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Everything Old is New Again: Using Loose Parts in Home Child Care Settings

Submitted by: *Affiliated Services for Children and Youth*

Historically, loose parts usually meant something was falling off a vehicle or were accessories to an appliance. While this could still be a correct definition of loose parts, today it means so much more. "Loose Parts" is one of the key phrases currently being used in many Early Childhood settings.

So what exactly are loose parts? In early learning and child care settings, loose parts are items that are open-ended and can be manipulated in many ways. They can be moved or carried from place to place, put together or taken apart and used both indoors and outdoors throughout the child care environment. Children can pick and choose how they want to use loose parts.

An environment which is rich in open-ended and real materials invokes children to experiment, engage, construct and invent; invites them to tinker, to manipulate and to play. Children use the materials combined with what they already know to create something that is greater than the parts. Loose materials can be bought, recycled or found natural objects.

Using loose parts in their creative play encourages brain development, scientific experimenting, mathematical thought, risk taking and learning by trial and error.

Children delight in helping create their environment both indoors and out. As a child of six or seven, I remember using sheets and blankets to create a play space. My mother provided the fabric and clothes pins and my friends and I did the rest. We created play areas on my front porch, in my back yard and in various spots indoors. My friends and I used our imaginations to figure out how to hold the fabric in place, coming up with various solutions from tucking blankets into couch cushions or wrapping them around table legs or porch railings and clothes pinning them to try to keep them in place. We created and problem solved by trial and error, all the time learning about gravity (why did the centre of the blanket fall in) and spatial awareness. Once we completed our hideaways, we added all kinds

of loose parts to our created space. Some days it would be toy dishes to have a tea party, other times it would be art materials or books or games.

When I was four, I remember using moving boxes that had windows cut out of them as a play space. I recall moving those boxes into various configurations to suit my ideas. I also remember using smaller boxes, cardboard tubes and blocks to create furniture for my play space. Various kitchen items made their way into this space so that I had my own "house" to look after.

By being encouraged to explore with these loose parts, my mother allowed me to discover and learn as well as make lasting memories!

So just what can children learn from having loose parts in their environment? When loose parts are available for use and can be transported to the block, dramatic play, creative and sensory areas both indoors and out, children get the opportunity to use their five senses to discover details around texture, shape, colour, size and type of material. They can classify, sort, match and transform materials and objects in their space over and over again. Children learn from experiential moments and enhance their brain development when using loose parts to learn about the world around them.

Loose parts can trigger children's interests and can also be added by caregivers to expand on those interests.

As with all toys and materials, it is important to think about the safety of the children in your care before including loose parts. Make sure they are not too small for infant and toddler mouths. Check for and repair sharp parts or anything else where children can easily get hurt.

Discard items as needed. Keep items clean and make sure children wash hands often particularly when handling items from nature. Avoid using tree nuts if you have a child with nut allergies. Talk with the

continued on Page 3

Sparkle Up Your Day

Submitted by: *The Early Childhood Community Development Centre*



Winter Play with Loose Parts

Invite the children to create their own winter wonderland with loose parts. Provide a supply of cotton balls, shredded paper, acrylic ice cubes, white or clear glass beads, empty yogurt cups (washed thoroughly), white water bottle caps, plastic snowflakes and evergreen tree branches. Items from your early learning environment such as a wooden roadway or train set, a selection of vehicles (don't forget snow removal vehicles), winter animals and an assortment of people should be included. As the children manipulate the materials and create their winter wonderland, pose questions such as: "How did you know to use the _____ in that way?", "When have you seen something like this before?" and "What is your favourite part of winter?" Why?"

Healthy Snowman Snack

Provide the children with banana slices, pretzel sticks, raisins, grapes, broken graham crackers, shredded carrots or any other healthy snack options you can think of and invite them to "build" snowmen. The best part about these snowmen is that the children get to enjoy them as their snack.

**Always ensure that the children's hands are clean before they handle the food items and be aware of any food allergies when making your food selection.*

***It is recommended that you cut grapes in half in a length-wise direction to prevent a choking hazard.*

Cloudy Day Song

(unknown author)

The day is cloudy and the wind is bold. Dress up warmly, you mustn't get cold!

Put on your coat and zip it up tight, put on your left boot, put on your right.

Put on your scarf and put on your hat, put on your mittens and clap-clap-clap!

Go outside and play and play. Come in again, and then we'll say-

Take off your coat that was zipped up tight, take off your left boot, take off your right.

Take off your scarf, take off your hat, take off your mittens, and then take a nap!

Note: Act out which body part each object goes to while you sing

**Always ensure scarves are tucked in to prevent children from getting caught on play equipment*



Organized and Safe

Submitted by: Affiliated Services for Children and Youth

The article about loose parts on pages 2 and 3 of this issue may have left you wondering how to keep items organized and the children in your care safe.

Oftentimes in Early Learning and Child Care, children want to keep what they have built or created out of various materials to use to extend their play later that day or the next. If you have a dedicated space for your home child care that is separate from your family living space, this may be possible. Sometimes it is not possible so taking or drawing a picture to remember how it looked might have to suffice.

At any rate, there comes a time when clean up of loose parts and the materials children use in their play is a must. This might happen in the morning and afternoon or it might happen after a few days of play.

Any items that are in the line of movement of the home child care children or your own family need to be put away at the end of each play session. Many items such as blocks or dress-up materials can be returned to their respective play areas. Outdoor materials may need to be put away to protect them from wind or precipitation.

Some suggestions for organizing materials include having shelves with baskets labelled with pictures. The children can then sort their loose parts into the baskets. Look for a wicker table that has storage baskets on a shelf under the table. Some caregivers mount baskets on a wall or room divider at the children's level. Watch for baskets or other suitable containers to go on sale or go to discount stores, second-hand stores or garage sales.

Larger items can be stored in an armoire, a decorative wagon, large garden urns or clay pots. Use hooks on a piece of lattice to hang things. Be aware of the level of the hooks so no one gets his face caught on one.

Smaller items can be stored on wooden or a stacked tray system which can be found in the office supply section of various stores. Use metal utensil holders, photo boxes, fabric bins or desk organizers to hold loose parts.

As with all materials, it is important to consider safety when using loose parts. Make sure that items are clean and there is nothing toxic. Avoid anything with lead paint. Avoid small pieces when there are infants

and toddlers present. Anything that can fit through the opening of a toilet roll is considered too small for infants and toddlers.

The Public Health Department in some communities restricts the use of toilet rolls, paper towel rolls and egg cartons due to possible contamination with fecal matter or salmonella. It is suggested that these items are avoided in home child care settings.

Check all materials for sharp edges, slivers or other potential causes for injury before using them in your home child care setting. Check materials often and discard anything unsafe. If illness occurs in your home, wash fabric materials and toys/loose parts to help avoid the spread of infection.

When using items found in nature, make sure no one picks up acorns, chestnuts, etc. if any child in your care has a tree nut allergy. Hands need to be washed or sanitized frequently to avoid illness from decomposing leaves, etc.

Keeping your play areas safe is essential. Keeping them organized makes for a home that is appealing to those you care for and your own families.

Everything Old is New Again (continued)

children about how to use items safely. See article on page 10.

A Partial List of Loose Parts

Tree Stumps	Logs	Branches cut into small pieces
Stones	Wooden or glass beads	Fabric
Wood Planks or Ends	Baskets	Cardboard or plastic tubes
Buckets	Balls	Rope or string
Shells	Burlap	Buttons
Laminate Tiles	Carpet	Small Marble or Granite Pieces
Plumbers Plastic Pieces	Blankets	Wooden, plastic or fabric people
Cushions	Doll Furniture	Wooden or plastic vehicles

Loose parts can come from the natural world which gives children a connection with nature. They can also be manufactured parts made from various materials.

Where can I get loose parts?

Loose parts can be gathered on nature walks, from home improvement stores, garage sales or from the families for whom you provide care. If you have a parent who is or knows a construction worker, perhaps he can obtain ends of wood or the cardboard tube that encases a concrete pillar form. Maybe you know of someone who sews or works in a fabric store. See if there are any remnants you can be given or buy inexpensively.

The Professional Resource Library in your community may lend out materials that can be used as loose parts. Consider buying a yearly membership to enhance your resources on a rotating basis.

Share items with other caregivers you know. Join a network to meet other home child care providers to expand your potential for sharing loose parts ideas and materials.

Consider designating part of your space to house loose parts that children can easily access to use in the many, varied ways you and the children in your care can imagine. See what fun and learning comes from this. Remember to document what is happening by writing anecdotes and taking or drawing pictures. Share this with the children's families at the end of the day. Bring out the pictures to encourage children to remember and perhaps extend on their previous play. Follow the children's lead, expand on their interests with other loose parts, books or art supplies and HAVE FUN!

Sources:

Deb Curtis and Margie Carter

Designs for Living and Learning Transforming Early Childhood Environments
Redleaf Press 2003

Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini

Beautiful Stuff Learning with Found Materials
Davis Publications, Inc. 1999



“Messing About”

Submitted by: *Early Childhood Community Development Centre*

The term *messing about* may be something you’ve been hearing when you are attending professional learning opportunities or networking sessions. Perhaps you have been browsing through the new document from the Ministry of Education called “Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children” which speaks to educators having the time and opportunity to engage in rich learning experiences. “It is only when they know what it feels like that they can inspire it in others.”

As a home child care professional, you likely often mess about without even realizing it. Have you ever spent time squishing play dough through your fingers, enjoyed a “spot of tea” from a tiny china cup or dropped a handful of pebbles into a bucket and listened to the sound they make? If you answered yes to any of these, then you are well on your way to understanding messing about.

For children, messing about is a joyful experience; a devoted period of time spent in unguided exploration during which learning takes place. The environment is carefully prepared, offering materials and equipment for children to engage in thus enabling them to construct, probe and test without instruction. Educators observe and offer thought-provoking questions while making note of interest areas.

How does the educator know what questions to ask? What materials to offer? It is advocated that the educator try the activities first, as those who have messed about with materials are better able to enrich the children’s learning. You have the opportunity to experience the activities and materials and reflect on how the children may use them; think about what questions you could ask to scaffold their knowledge or extend on the activity and get a sense of the feelings that may arise while engaging with the materials.

When you squished the play dough through your fingers, was that a pleasant feeling or did it make you uncomfortable? Did you think about how it would feel to poke it with a straw or push rocks into it? While you were sipping your “tea”, were you worried about breaking the tiny cup? While you dropped the pebbles did you think about how other items would sound if you



dropped them in the bucket? What about if you dropped them into a metal bowl or onto a wooden plate?

When you take the time to truly engage with the materials, you are sure to enhance the learning opportunities for the children in your care.

Source:

Anne Marie Coughlin and Lorrie Baird
Think, Feel, Act Lessons from Research about Young Children Pedagogical Leadership
Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2013

Caregiver Asks: Artwork is not a Receipt of Quality Process vs. Product

Submitted by: *Haldimand-Norfolk REACH – Ontario Early Years Centre*

Question:

I feel like parents want to see crafts coming home with their children regularly. How do I meet the needs of the children’s development and ensure the parents feel satisfied with our creative experiences at childcare?

Answer:

Many parents feel good when they see their children bringing home “crafts” from childcare. It is one way they are able to see that their children have been participating in fun activities while they are in your care. Parents are coming from what they know, how they grew up and what our society deems a quality creative experience.

Preschool children need an opportunity to freely explore various items. Providing lots of paper, supplies and loose parts is an ideal way to support exploration and creativity. “Cookie cutter” crafts only show the “right way” or one way to do it. Parents are typically used to seeing all of the children’s artwork displayed together. Parents may be used to seeing all of the little cut-and-paste teddy bears on a bulletin board; some with all of the parts where they “should be” and some bears with their faces on their tummies. Although this is very cute, the skills practiced in this activity are limited.

Lisa Murphy (the Ooey Gooley Lady) states that “...If it takes you longer to get the activity ready than it takes them to do it...chances are it is not process oriented.”

Use any area in your home where you would have displayed artwork to display stories of the activity. Some caregivers find it helpful to write on the back or to include a note with the take-home piece highlighting the skills or a story about how the artwork was created. This is such a valuable way to allow a parent to catch a glimpse into their child’s day.

Photos are another way to highlight the process of the artistic experience. Seeing a photo of their child in action along with a short story or documentation is sure to reassure parents that there is wonderful learning and creating happening in your program. Use photos to highlight the skills being learned while children are

playing and creating in your home. You could also use photos or a digital photo frame to display pictures of children interacting with materials.

Highlight to the parents what the children are learning from the open exploration of materials. The goal of art experiences for preschool children is not the finished product. Preschool children are experimenting with colours, lines, textures and patterns. Practice makes perfect while exploring various mediums or supplies. With practice, children will gain confidence and skills working with various materials. This will lead to future abilities in creativity, writing, shapes and colours. Children will be able to express emotions, stories and experiences through their artwork.

“If the parents come in and look at your bulletin board and whisper in your ear, “what is it?”, you are on the right track. Their art will not and should not look like something.” Lisa Murphy

Sources:

Lisa Murphy
The Ooey Gooley Handbook
Ooey Gooley Inc. 2013

Lisa Murphy
Ooey Gooley Website www.ooey.gooley.com handouts Creative Art with Young Children, It’s the Process Not the Product



The Uniqueness of a Child: Understanding Multiple Intelligences

Submitted by: Ontario Early Years Centre: Brant

In his book "Frames of Mind", Howard Gardner introduced the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Anyone who works with children has likely observed how every child is unique in his interests, personalities, abilities and gifts. Why is it that some children appear to be very musical from infancy, others seem to master puzzles with ease and some talk very early in their development but appear delayed when it comes to math skills? Gardner suggests that each of us is intelligent or "smart" right from birth as our brains are prewired to be gifted in certain areas. He also stresses that we need to foster children's areas of strengths in order to help with the areas of development that are not as strong. As Home Child Care Providers, understanding the various intelligences will assist us in our programming to make sure we are fostering brain development in every area including:

Word Smart: This child seems to have a natural ability at understanding words, spelling, loves books, word board games and telling stories. Phonetic awareness and letter recognition is often early to develop.

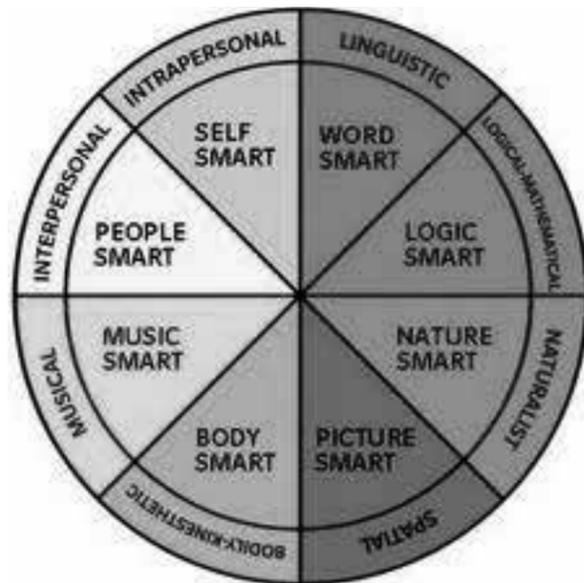
Math Smart: This child is curious about how things work, loves numbers and math, puzzles and, as she develops, likes experiments and computers.

Picture Smart: This child seems to have gifts of understanding maps and charts, likes drawing, doodling and creating 3-D sculptures with blocks or other manipulatives and enjoys taking things apart and putting them back together.

Body Smart: This child seems to excel in numerous sports, taps or moves when required to sit still, often enjoys dance or gymnastics, enjoys physical activities and usually has excellent fine-motor coordination.

Music Smart: This child seems to enjoy music, rhythm and singing right from infancy. Often the child has a pleasant singing voice, shows aptitude with musical instruments, speaks or moves in a rhythmical way and may show sensitivity to surrounding noises.

People Smart: This child enjoys socializing with



friends, is a natural leader, is caring, empathetic and prefers to be around people. From infancy, seems to understand feelings from facial expressions, gestures and voice.

Self Smart: This child shows a sense of independence, knows his abilities and weaknesses. Often very organized and goal oriented, this child prefers order and routine.

Nature Smart: This child talks about favourite pets or outdoor spots, enjoys nature preserves and the zoo and has a strong connection to the outside world. She likely prefers to play outdoors, collects bugs, flowers and leaves and is interested in biology, astronomy, meteorology or zoology.

Source:

Howard Gardiner

Frames of Mind The Theory of Multiple Intelligences
Basic Books, 1993

How Do Children Learn: Styles of Learning

Submitted by: Ontario Early Years Centre: Brant

Have you ever taken the time to really observe the children you care for at play? It is amazing to watch how they all seem to approach activities in different and unique ways. Let's imagine you have set up a new science area for spring and have included a growing centre with lots of planting activities to explore. Books and posters on planting, dirt in the sensory area with plastic plants, trowels, plastic pots and water sprayers are all key aspects of your new centre. Herb plants are carefully placed on the table for children to smell and examine. You watch as children talk animatedly about their explorations and discoveries. It's so exciting to watch... and one style does not fit all!

What is really interesting is HOW they each explore! You have one preschooler who silently watches the other children happily scooping dirt into the pots and placing the plastic plants inside to resemble grown plants. This child looks at the books and posters and, after a period of time, plays with the dirt carefully examining what she sees. Another child asks you lots of questions about the planting station and chats incessantly about what he is doing. A third child immediately starts to touch and feel the dirt, busily scoops it into pots, touches and smells all of the growing herbs and sprays them with the water. What you have just observed are key examples of how children learn using their primary Learning Styles. These Learning Styles are: Visual (seeing the information), Auditory (hearing and talking about the information) and Kinesthetic-tactile (touching, participating and exploring with their hands and bodies.) Research shows that it is best if, as in the case of your planting centre, you provide activities which support children's exploration using all three learning styles. However, research also shows that children still need to use their primary learning style in order to totally internalize the learning and make it their own. Typically, we prefer to teach in the way we are most comfortable by using our primary learning style. As educators, however, it is important to make sure we teach in all three styles whenever we are exploring a new topic or concept so every child in our program can learn to the best of his/her abilities.



Visual learners

- remember visual details by watching what is happening
- may appear hesitant when doing or seeing something new
- prefer to see what they are learning

Auditory or language learners

- will likely ask lots of questions about what is being learned
- are chatty
- need to have things explained orally

Kinesthetic-tactile learners

- want to actually do whatever is being talked about or learned
- like to move around while listening or talking
- like to touch things in order to learn about them which may seem to be a behaviour issue but this is how these children learn. They do need to learn to wait their turn but should have lots of opportunities to explore materials being offered.

The Ancient Chinese Proverb said it best: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."
Confucius



Home Child Care Environment + Materials + You = Healthy Learning

Submitted by: Early Childhood Community Development Centre

“Children’s Early Experiences last a lifetime”...

How Does Learning Happen?

The government of Ontario has recently released resources that highlight the latest research in early childhood development. The resources - How Does Learning Happen?, Think, Feel, Act and Excerpts from ELECT are intended to encourage personal reflection and encourage team discussions. As I reflect on each of the resources, there is a common thread throughout each one. Each resource emphasizes that healthy development and learning is a result of responsive relationships, materials for discovery and the invitation to learn through play.

Responsive Relationships - The opportunity to feel connected to others, the opportunity to feel that individual strengths and experiences are valued and the opportunity to form relationships with others begin to foster feelings of safety and trust that all children need in order to explore with confidence.

As a Home Child Care Provider, you have the opportunity to provide consistent, responsive and nurturing care. The opportunity to “connect” with the children you share your day with vs. “correct and direct” begins to develop healthy emotions, language and thinking skills.

Some simple ways to connect are to:

- Provide warm, responsive physical contact; a pleasant, calm voice
- Be at the child’s level - take opportunities for eye contact and join the child in his/her play
- Be a play partner for the child
- Foster thoughtfulness and caring by listening to children and by encouraging them to listen to others and share ideas

*Something to think about...*Would you enjoy your day more if you had more time for connecting with

individual children in play? Think about how you can change your daily schedule to do so.

Materials for Discovery - Attention to a child’s surroundings is essential for creating an environment where learning and well-being are promoted. Rich, open-ended materials invite children to engage in active, creative and meaningful exploration, play and inquiry.

A healthy learning environment includes:

- Materials that are fun, promote learning through play and challenge children to think creatively
- Activities that provide a wide variety of experiences such as: indoor and outdoor activities, cultural or seasonal activities and activities connected with the child’s community
- Sufficient time for playful exploration and discovery

Simple ways to Encourage Exploration and Discovery include:

* Loose Parts and Natural Items - materials that encourage natural curiosity. They can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are materials with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials.

* Try using items such as buckets, pulleys, balance scales, funnels, tubes and tape measures to encourage math and numeracy skills. Natural materials such as sticks, stones, pine cones and leaves or sensory experiences with snow, ice and water will encourage play and inquiry. Adding real items such as tea cups and silverware will enhance dramatic play.

* Include sensory activities, building blocks, creative supplies, books, writing materials, scientific, natural

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Home Child Care Environment + Materials + You (continued)

and mathematical materials, household items, dramatic play and music.

Something to think about...How will the materials and activities you provide invite investigation, lingering and conversation? Think about materials that are in your home and experiences in your community that children would like to explore.

Invitation to Play - Play is how children make sense of the world and is an effective method of learning for young children. Children use their own ideas, create, collaborate and solve problems. Play engages children’s attention when it offers a challenge that is within the child’s capacity to master.

As a Home Child Care provider, it is important to reflect often on the routines, schedule and rules of the day to allow opportunities for play.

Some simple ways to provide opportunities to play are to:

- Avoid following a watch or clock when possible. Gauge when to change activities, go outside or have a snack by observing the children.
- Schedule opportunities for uninterrupted play. Children need time to explore and engage in activities that interest them. It can be frustrating for a child to finally have the “perfect plan or idea” and then be told to tidy up.
- Set-up or ‘stage’ activities to spark a child’s interest (i.e.: build a train set or a tower prior to the child’s arrival and observe how the play continues or set-up a ‘tea party’ and invite the children to join you)
- Reflect on rules. Concern for a child’s safety is important but sometimes the number of rules can hinder a child from exploration. With support and respect, children will assess the hazards and take steps to ensure their own safety.

*Something to think about...*Does your schedule allow time for children to learn through play? Think about how you can encourage play.

In summary, spend time with the children you

care for, engage in activities that interest them and provide materials and experiences that encourage the natural curiosity within them. By doing so, you will be supporting children in developing a love for life, learning and ensuring that they will be an active participant in their own learning.

For more information or to access your own copy of How Does Learning Happen?, Think, Feel, Act or Excerpts from ELECT visit www.edu.gov.on.ca

Sources:

Excerpts from “ELECT”

Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2014

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2014

Think, Feel, Act Lessons from Research about Young Children

Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2013

