

December
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Medicine Hat & District Child Care Association

In partnership with the:



On Saturday October 22nd, Alberta Health Services hosted the first ever "Flu-Lapalooza" event for families. Following their flu shots, children were treated to teddy bears, juice boxes, a jumping tent and inflatable slide and much more. The Medicine Hat & District Child Care Association set up a multicultural play center including a tepee, puppets, dolls, books, puzzles, tree blocks, etc. The Canadian woodland animal puppets were the definite favourite, hands down! Approximately 800 people went through the clinic, with the first 400 going through within the first hour! Many thanks to the Medicine Hat College Early Learning and Child Care Students who volunteered their time to play with and supervise the children!!

Turning Tears into Cheers!





Medicine Hat & District Child Care Association

www.MHDCCA.com

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Faster! Higher! Harder!

Children need risky play!



We are all aware of the importance of play to the development of children. As our technology is ever evolving, children are playing differently and are exposed to a wider menu of play items. Our Western society holds many beliefs about what is a safe way for children to play; thus, we are increasingly regulating the way our children play because of safety legislation and litigation concerns. Despite our attempts to regulate play, children are still drawn to activities that will bring immense sensations and that have an element of danger to them. This play often occurs outdoors and will involve swinging (speed), climbing (heights), dangerous tools, or being rough and tumble in nature. This type of "risky" play has an important developmental component for children that is often minimized and forgotten.

Why is risky play important? When children are allowed to engage in risky play, they develop real-life coping skills, such as realistic risk perception and risk management. But more importantly, risky play is thrilling, enjoyable, creates a sense of achievement, and boosts self-esteem. Most often, when children are playing, their play occurs under adult supervision, which is the best protection for minimizing accidents. Even when adults provide safe play equipment, children will inevitably use the equipment dangerously. This is believed to occur because infants naturally experience anxiety in situations they are not developmentally mature enough to handle. As a child grows, mastery of situations that once provoked anxiety is necessary. Managing situations in which the outcome of choices made is unknown is a frequent occurrence for adults. A lack of risky play in childhood might be linked to the development of psychopathology, such as anxiety disorders (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011 & Sandseter, 2009). In my practice, I have seen the benefits of risky play.

I run an integrated playgroup with Kallie Lavoie, a Clinical Social worker during the summer. The group focused on facilitating play between children on the autism spectrum and peers their age. The group is run at Kin Coulee Park. The children requested to climb a part of the coulee during our group. Children who were not typically leaders or who were not engaged socially emerged as leaders and immersed themselves in this activity. The children banded together to support each other to complete the climb. It was incredible to see the determination and pride that the children experienced once they reached the top. What a wonderful social skills-building activity that ended with a great sense of accomplishment! There was an adult present at all times, and the children were coached on how to manage any situations in which they might feel uncomfortable.

As parents, teachers, daycare facilitators, or anyone who works with children, remembering children's need for risky play is important. As we are exposed to increasingly complex technology, we can forget the benefits of playing outside; using nature and our imaginations is often a forgotten toy. In the great outdoors, there are many challenges waiting, and children need challenges for their development. It is our responsibility as adults to let our children experience challenges and to be present for problem solving. We need to follow our children's lead more in these types of activities. In closing, get outside and go exploring, follow a child's lead, and have some good old-fashioned fun! Written by: Amanda Lafferty, B.Sc., B.Sc.OT., MACP.

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Our individual membership drive has been amazing! We now have over 70 child care professionals that have joined as individual members. Congratulations to Diane from St. Patrick's Out of School Care. She was the winner of a Cineplex Movie for Two Gift Certificate drawn at our November meeting! Welcome to all our new members!

