

September Newsletter 2006

The thought for the month; One man shall have one vote. Author unknown.

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Play and the Outdoors: What's New Under the Sun

By Susan J. Oliver and Edgar Klugman

A generation "at two" with the outdoors?

Are today's ever more plugged-in young children developing "nature-deficit disorder"? (Louv, 2005). Will they grow up associating bugs with computers rather than the great outdoors? Do they prefer to play indoors because, in the words of one child, "that's where all the electrical outlets are" (Louv, 2005)?

Whatever the reality, many parents and teachers feel instinctively that childhood today is very different from what it was for previous generations, and a sizable part of the difference has something to do with the changing amount of outdoor play time. Where are the lazy afternoons of exploration in the backyard or local park, lifting up rocks and watching ants race out of sight? What happened to long days in the summer sun, making up games, and setting off on outdoor adventures with neighborhood playmates? Today's children, noted a recent New York Times article, increasingly are "at two" with nature. "The days of the free-range childhood seem to be over," noted the Times (McKee, 2005).

Changes in outdoor playtime for today's kids

While a bike ride around almost any neighborhood on a sunny Sunday afternoon may leave you asking, "Where are the kids?" there are few studies to confirm that children are getting less play time than a generation ago, says Dorothy Justus Sluss, associate professor of Early Childhood Education at Clemson University. "Because we did not document the amount of time children spent in various kinds of play fifty years ago, it's hard to establish a reliable comparison with today's kids," Sluss explains.

Some researchers, however, are making attempts to understand changes we're seeing by asking parents to think back to their childhoods and report their perceptions about what's different for their own kids. In a nationwide study of a geographically representative sample of over 800 mothers of children aged three to twelve, Professor Rhonda Clements of Manhattanville College and immediate past president of the American Association for the Child's Right to Play found that 70% of mothers reported they played outside every day when they were their child's age, compared to 31% of their children who have everyday outdoor opportunities (Clements, 2004).

Moreover, a recent study at the University of Michigan looked at the time-use differences between children in the early 1980s and the late 1990s and found that kids aged three to five have one-third less free play time (indoor and outdoor) than a generation ago and nearly triple the amount of time in organized sports (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001a; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001b).

According to an April 2004 study of 300 parents of children under five years old conducted by Youth Pulse, a marketing services company that monitors youth behavior, only 39% of children aged two to five "run around or play outdoors" every day or more often. For children under age two, only 19% have daily outdoor playtime (Youth Trust, 2004).

Helping young children experience "the natural classroom"

As an early childhood educator, you are in a powerful and unique position to make sure that children's exposure to the outdoors and its ever-changing wonders is woven into the core of your curriculum — and the fabric of their day. The many sights, sounds, smells, and textures of the outdoors make it a natural classroom, and one that fits the exuberant gross motor, construction play, and symbolic play instincts of preschoolers. In fact, research indicates that preschoolers engage in richer symbolic play outdoors than indoors (Shin & Frost, 1995) thanks to the relatively greater availability of low-realistic, low-structured, natural materials, spaciousness, and teacher involvement" (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2005) found outdoors as compared to indoors.

Other advantages you'll find when you step outside with your class include greater opportunities for children to engage in: 1) free play, because adults tend to control indoor play more closely than outdoor play; 2) different types of social arrangements, because the nature of outdoor games and exploration offer children chances to break away from their regular alliances; 3) play that contributes to their movement skills and physical fitness (Sluss, 2005).

The GAP Community Child Care Center recently held its summer event, celebrating twenty-four years of community service.

Many of GAP parents' present and past, also community leaders came out to enjoy music, fun and food.

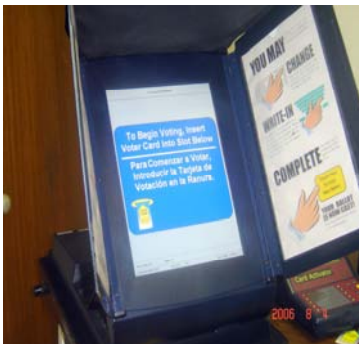
Enjoy the pictures!!!



Women's Collective



One of our parents is enjoying some of the good food!



Voting Machines



Candidate Vincent Gray



Parents, staff and children



Little Gappers



Staff and parent having fun



look its blue clues!!

Happy Birthday to our Gappers and staff

Ariel 09/24/04

Lyric 9/24/05

Lucky 09/29/03

Vivian 9/30

Rya 09/03

Barbara. 9/28

Maniyah B. 09/8/05

Edith 9/26

Ethan 09/10/05

Yanira 9/29

Emmanuel 9/12/05



Important dates to remember

September 13th 2006 the owls and the chipmunk classes will journey to Baltimore Maryland



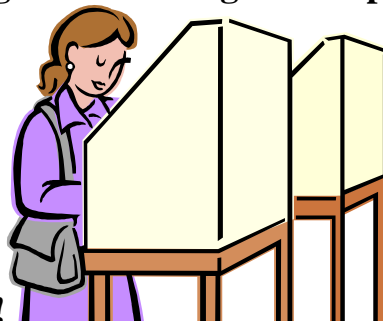
to visit the Baltimore Aquarium.

GAP'S first parent meeting for the school year will be held on Wednesday September 13th 2006. The presenter will be from the Emergency Preparedness Agency. The meeting will be



held at 5:30 pm in the Angels class.

Vote Vote Vote September 12th is Election Day in the DC Metropolitan area. If you are a registered voter go to the polls and vote, **EVERY**



VOTES COUNTS!!!