

Hirsh-Pasek, K., R.M. Golinkoff, L.E. Berk, & D.G. Singer. 2009. *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool: Presenting the Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press. 121 pp. ISBN 9780195382716. \$19.95.

This monograph highlights the false dichotomy between play and learning. The authors present evidence that shows how policies of the last decade that eliminated play from children's lives at home and school are taking preschool education in the wrong direction. They discuss the causes of this current crisis in preschool education, including societal misconceptions and accountability pressures that make curriculum development more responsive to the constraints of assessment than to findings from evidence-based practice about the needs of children. A review of the research indicates that academic and social development are inseparable and that children need both unstructured free play and playful learning under adults' gentle guidance to prepare them for elementary school and lifelong learning.

The epilogue includes learning principles that reflect consensus over the years about how children learn best. The authors show how the principles align with playful learning. The book ends with recommendations to help policy makers translate the research findings into good preschool programs. Succinct, easy-to-read language makes this a good tool for defending the critical role of play in young children's lives.

Bancroft, S., M. Fawcett, & P. Hay, eds. 2008. *Researching Children Researching the World: 5x5x5 = Creativity*. Sterling, VA: Trentham. 190 pp. ISBN: 9781858564340. \$32.95.

The authors describe how artists, teachers, and cultural centers work as partners to support creativity in 3- to 5-year-old children. Based in England, 5x5x5 = Creativity is an arts-based action research organization inspired by the Reggio Emilia schools. It began in 2000 with 5 artists in 5 schools and 5 cultural centers and now operates in 55 schools. An artist and a staff member from a local gallery, museum, theater, or other cultural center work with a teacher to study and document children's creative capacities. In a continuous cycle of inquiry, the teams plan experiences to support children's developing ideas and meet to reflect on children's creative behaviors, values, and relationships with each other and the environment. The artists bring new insight and ideas to the educational context.

Examples of projects from the schools illustrate how the collaboration works, including the mentors' roles, project assessment, and professional development. The authors discuss what they have learned about fostering creativity in and with young children and about the transformation of teachers. This exciting project offers rich possibilities for U.S. schools.

Roggman, L.A., L.K. Boyce, & M.S. Innocenti. 2008. *Developmental Parenting: A Guide for Practitioners*. Baltimore: Brookes. 227 pp. ISBN 9781557669766. \$26.95.

This book is for home visitors—early childhood educators who work with parents of infants and toddlers on an individual basis in the home. In developmental parenting the focus is on neither the child nor the parent but the parenting process. The goal is to help parents support their children's early development during routine activities in the home and neighborhood. The home visitor helps the parents learn to respond to the

child's changing developmental needs, such as fostering an infant's emerging language. The authors support their parenting model with research, and they highlight four child outcomes: keeping children safe and healthy, establishing secure attachment, promoting children's exploration, and encouraging communication.

Examples of successful interactions and home-visiting dialogues illustrate the home visitor's role—for example, setting up collaborative relationships with parents and jointly planning activities that build on the strengths of the children and parents. Chapters address topics like management and supervision, assessment, and what to do when a parent is in crisis. This exceptional book could also have application as a college text.

Powell, D.R. 2008. *Who's Watching the Babies? Improving the Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE. 107 pp. ISBN 9781934019214. \$24.95.

The most common form of nonparental care for infants and toddlers is care by relatives and friends in informal arrangements. Yet this important segment of early care is often neglected by our field. This book sheds light on the unique dimensions of such caregiving and is a guide for developing and implementing programs to support and educate the providers. Powell analyzes the limited research and describes the challenges and lessons learned from three existing support programs. He highlights the caregivers' distinctive needs and interests and suggests ways training programs can support the caregivers, beginning with an understanding of the realities of informal care in their communities.

The author presents guidelines for identifying and recruiting caregivers and outlines the types of support caregivers need and effective methods for assisting and training them. Six recommendations detail actions the early childhood field can take to build a support system for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. This thoughtful analysis provides valuable insights into how to enhance the quality of this infant/toddler care.

Diamond, J. 2008. *Welcome to the Aquarium: A Year in the Lives of Children*. New York: The New Press. 245 pp. ISBN 9781595581716. \$25.95.

In an engaging narrative account, a veteran teacher takes the reader through a year in her kindergarten classroom. Chapters cover topics like literacy, art, organizing the day, and engaging in investigations, and they include creative, practical ideas. For example, every Friday the class dictates a letter to parents about the week's events. The teacher photocopies the letter so each child can illustrate it and add individual comments.

But the book goes beyond practical strategies, with insights into some of the larger issues and dilemmas of good practice. Diamond draws from her progressive roots as a student, and later teacher, at Bank Street College to discuss topics like how and why teachers protect and nurture group life in their classrooms, how they structure curriculum, and how they interact with children to enable individual learners to communicate their thoughts and pursue their ideas in greater depth. The lyrical quality of the writing engages readers, and the author stimulates our thinking with discussions of how she translates the theories of such people as Dewey, Duckworth, Gallas, Carlina Rinaldi, and Susan Isaacs into classroom practices.

Titles are selected from the many new books received by NAEYC. Educator **Gail Perry** writes the brief annotations. The books are available from the publishers listed, your local bookstore, or online retailers.