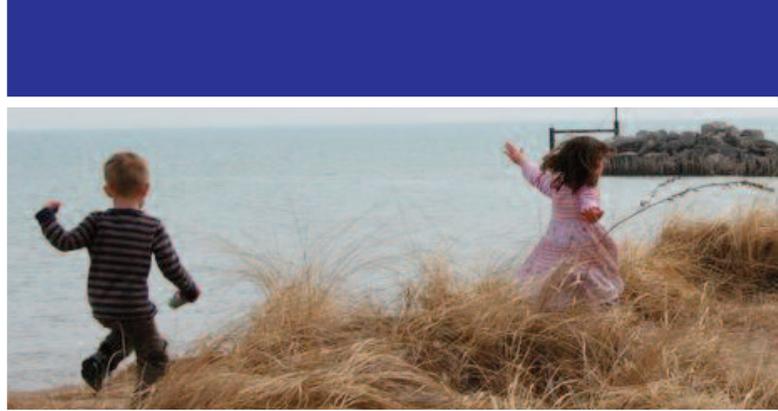




The Alliance

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



Fall/Winter Newsletter 2014-2015

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The Role of Risk in Play and Learning

BY JOAN ALMON

Real play means taking risks – physical, social, and even cognitive. Children are constantly trying out new things and learning a great deal in the process. They love to move from adventure to adventure. They face the risk of mistakes and even of injuries, but that does not deter children. They embrace life, play, and risk with gusto, and they are prepared for a certain amount of bumps and bruises while growing up. Even a broken bone doesn't slow them down for long. Fortunately, they heal fast.

Although no one wants to see a child injured, creating an environment that is overly safe creates a different kind of danger for them. Growing up in a risk-averse society, such as we currently have, means children are not able to practice risk-assessment which enables them to match their skills with the demands of the environment. As a result, many children have become very timid and are reluctant to take risks. At the opposite extreme, many have difficulty reading the situations they face and take foolhardy risks, repeatedly landing in trouble.

When children are given a chance to engage freely in adventurous play, they quickly learn to assess their own skills and match them to the demands of

the environment. Such children ask themselves—consciously or unconsciously – “how high can I climb” or “is this log across the creek strong enough to support me?” They become savvy about

themselves and their environment. Children who are confident about taking chances rebound well when things don't work out at first. They are resilient and will try again and again until they master a situation that challenges them—or wisely avoid it, if that seems best.

As a preschool and kindergarten teacher, I liked to give my children as many opportunities to face age-appropriate risk as possible. In the various playgrounds where I taught, there were trees to climb and hills to slide down in snow, or to

roll down in other seasons. Indoors, the children could climb on our sturdy tables and build their play houses high. They played with tree stumps and stones, some heavy enough to cause injury if the children were not careful. They sewed toys using scissors and needles, and cut fruit and vegetables using knives. Overall, the children were remarkably careful, and I was constantly amazed at how quickly they mastered a new challenge and how well they handled it.

Continued on page 12

Joan Almon is a co-founder of the U.S. Alliance for Childhood and an advocate for play for all ages and in all arenas, including playful learning in preschools and kindergartens. She was formerly a Waldorf early childhood educator and taught in Maryland. She lectures and writes on child development and play and has a special love for storytelling and puppetry.



Dear Parents and Educators,

Welcome to membership in The Alliance for Early Childhood! You're a member thanks to your child's school which maintains an organizational membership. For 25 years we've been a community collaboration organization on Chicago's North Shore promoting the healthy growth and development of children from birth to age eight.

We offer tremendous value – more than 48 schools and organizations in Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth, and neighboring communities on the North Shore are members. We directly impact over 5,000 children and their families annually. Our core belief is that children rely on family and community to shape them into the adults of tomorrow. With this in mind, we offer resources, programs, and support for parents, professionals, and families.

Get to know us! Each year we offer programming for parents, families, and educators, which is free of charge and open to the public, thanks to the generous underwriting of sponsors and philanthropy. In the Community Calendar section of this newsletter, you will see Alliance programs designed for you. You can also download our complete calendar of events from our website, which happens to be a fantastic repository of information for parents and educational practitioners alike. For instance, the Resources section features an article library and a comprehensive community calendar, as well as videos and handouts from past lectures.

Parents, mark your calendars:

- **Beyond Time Out: Dealing with Challenging Behaviors**, October 29, 2014.
- **Encouraging Adventure: Redefining Success to Include Risk**, November 13, 2014.
- **Redshirting: The practice of holding children back from kindergarten so they begin school at age 6 or older**, January 23, 2015.
- **Strategies for Using Technology at Home**, March 11, 2015 (Part 1: Webinar) & March 18, 2015 (Part 2: In-person workshop).

We even offer exciting programs for families. Perhaps you know us for ScreenBreak? This year, March 1-7, 2015, we'll be celebrating our 21st year producing this acclaimed week of engaging and fun ways to enjoy family time without the intrusion of screens and computers.

And make time for one (or many) of our Let's Play initiatives where we facilitate creative, "loose parts" play opportunities for families in local play-spaces. These programs are designed based on research, confirming unstructured play is essential to the cognitive and emotional development and well-being of children.

Are you a school administrator or educator? We have an energizing, valuable slate of programs designed just for your professional development. Plan to carve out time in your busy, professional schedule for:

- **Why Won't They Sit at Circle Time?!**, October 29, 2014.
- **Strategies for Using Technology in the Classroom and for Family Engagement**, March 18, 2015.
- **2nd Annual Inspiring Nature Play Conference**, May 6, 2015.

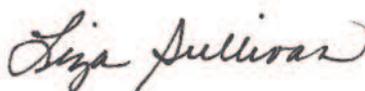
And we know that professional networking not only brings people together to learn and grow, but also gives practitioners immediate access to insights and best practices you might not otherwise gain. I'd like to invite you to get involved in our networking platforms by attending these opportunities:

- **Preschool Directors Roundtables** (7 sessions, October 2014 through June 2015).
- **25th Annual Networking Dinner** (January 22, 2015) with Dr. Samuel Meisels presenting "Why the Early Years of Life Matter."
- **Preschool-Kindergarten Articulation Meeting** (February 24, 2015) allowing preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators an opportunity to discuss the healthy transition to kindergarten.

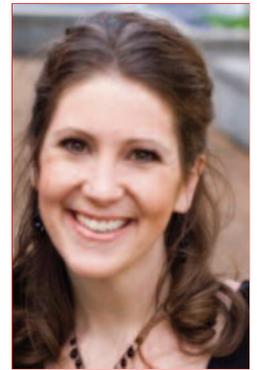
Whether you are a parent with young children in our member schools or you are an educator, we want you to join us. Each year we set ambitious goals to move the educational needle evermore in the direction of excellence and with insights. We can't do this without you!

Partake in our events and tell me what you think. I want to hear from you.

With kindest regards,



Liza Sullivan
Executive Director • LSullivan@TheAllianceForEC.org



It's Just Like Riding a Bike: Why Scaffolding Is So Important For Teaching and Parenting

BY GEORGIA BOZEDAY, Ed.D.

This common expression, “It’s just like riding a bike,” is often spoken to assure someone that mastery of a new skill is as easy as riding a bike. While this saying serves a clear purpose in popular culture, I would propose that the process of learning to ride a bike is actually quite complex. It involves several stages of development, including specific kinds of support from others. This perspective on bike riding will serve as my reference point in examining the concept of scaffolding as it applies to the everyday work of parents and teachers.

We are all familiar with the noun, scaffolding, which connotes a structure that provides support during the building process. Within an educational framework, scaffolding becomes a verb. The concept of scaffolding, sometimes referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), is usually credited to Lev Vygotsky, a Russian neuroscientist whose book, *Thought and Language*, was published in 1934. Vygotsky’s theories were based on the idea that the development of higher cognitive functions in children emerges through practical activity in a social environment. Amazingly, Vygotsky’s ideas are being validated today using 21st century technology.

The meaning of scaffolding within a learning framework is similar to its use in construction. For parents and teachers, scaffolding instruction refers to the process of analyzing the steps necessary for learning, ascertaining the current level of the child’s development (ZPD) and determining the best approach for supporting the child in learning something new. Within the study of executive functions (the process by which we learn to organize, plan and manage time, inhibit impulsive response, utilize working memory, and think strategically)

scaffolding is central to the life-long mastery of these critical skills. As such, applying the concept of scaffolding is perfectly suited to an analogy with the process of learning to ride a bike.

Take a moment to think about (or imagine) a time when you were involved in helping a child learn to ride a bike. You probably weren’t aware of how your actions progressed, step-by-step, toward the prized moment when your child achieved his/her first independent bike-riding experience. You probably didn’t realize that this intricate, scaffolding process actually began much earlier. However, I’m certain you were aware of the “magic moment” when

you let go of the bike and your little girl or boy experienced those first seconds of exhilaration resulting from both mastering a new set of skills and the newly earned freedom to travel independently. At each level of development, scaffolding is based on the ability of the teacher or parent to ascertain that the child has reached a level of readiness for the next step. The process of learning to ride a bike can serve as a metaphor for learning in general. Here are the specific steps described both within the bike-riding experience and as they fit a broader application to all learning.

STEP ONE:

• Planning, Preparing, and Modeling – Providing The First Experiences

Usually the first experience of bike riding for the child is as a passenger on the back of a parent’s bike, either in a child’s bike seat or in a compartment being pulled by the adult’s bike. In this first encounter, parents control the experience, guiding the sense of freedom and adventure. The kids get all the fun without any of the work – literally a free ride. On the other hand, they are completely passive relative to determining the route and the destination. They are really just “along for the ride.” Parents and children may enjoy this stage over several months or even years.

In executive functions terminology at this stage parents and teachers are establishing a basis for the child’s future learning – sometimes referred to as prior knowledge. The adults are planning and modeling, all within a safe and comfortable environment. Children are observing the adults, with heightened benefit if the adults are sharing the planning stage with the children. These stimulating experiences supply the initial “neural spark” that helps motivate kids throughout the entire learning process.



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Q&A

Advice by Paul Sweetow, LCSW

Paul Sweetow is a licensed psychotherapist with a practice in Winnetka. In addition to his psychotherapy work, Paul is a world karate champion and blends karate and therapy at his school in Winnetka. More information is available at www.PaulSweetow.com.

Dear Readers,

We have been fortunate for the past six years to have Barbara Monier write this column. She had a beautiful blend of wisdom and connection. Her words have helped thousands of people; she is more than a tough act to follow.

When I first received my graduate degree twenty-three years ago, the psychology of human beings seemed so complex. But as the years go by, I find that living a happy life can be much simpler than it appears. Simple doesn't mean easy of course, but I've found that combatting life's woes with compassion, vulnerability, patience, and resilience can help me tackle just about anything.

Parenting requires these same basic principles, and I think you'll find that incorporating them into your life can make being a parent a joyful ride.

It's my privilege to be answering your questions today and to be a part of this wonderful community. Here we go...

From,
Paul Sweetow, LCSW

Question

As we start back to school and return to our busy schedules with afterschool and weekend activities, I am left feeling overwhelmed and stressed. I'm wondering if this pace and daily stress may also be taking a toll on the kids. Can you provide any insights and strategies?

—Stressed Out and Worried

Answer

Dear Stressed:

Indeed, an overscheduled parent and/or child will take a toll on everyone. The fact that you're asking the question tells me that

you're aware of the potential consequences. This self-awareness is an excellent starting point. Focusing too much on performance will often counter the very reason why we enroll our children in extracurricular pursuits in the first place. Children have a wide array of wonderful organized activities available to them today. As parents, it's attractive to offer our child experiences in music, sports, academic support, social/emotional guidance, and on and on. We won't even get started on the obsession to prepare our child for the perfect college and adult life – that will be a topic for another day.

But to get the best results in life we need to work in recovery time. Athletes call this interval training because they know that being in a never-ending state of physical stress will cause their bodies to break down without the time to rebuild. With all of the activities kids have today, as well as the constant stimulus of technology, recovery time for both parents and children is more crucial than ever.

As the airlines say "put your own oxygen mask on first." You need time to recover and refuel in order to have the energy required to parent your little one. As a busy professional and father, I know how exhausting it can be keeping kids safe, healthy, and happy. In order to help our kids recover, we have to plan our own recovery time first.

So, how can you de-stress? It's crucial to address both mental and physical recovery, though the two certainly overlap. To recover mentally, immerse yourself in something that I like to call a "flow" state. This can be anything absorbing and enjoyable that doesn't require too much thought:

painting, going for a run, or playing golf, for example. Flow states allow the mind to be at ease and help us rejuvenate. To physically recover, pay special attention to your sleep, exercise, and nutrition habits. These are all things that fall by the wayside when we get busy, but neglecting them compounds our stress.

Now let's get back to your kids! It's important that you schedule time in the day for your child to do nothing that requires intense focus and performance. For young children, they recover well in a state of play – you may schedule a play date, create something with them (legos or art, for example), or get outside and explore the local forest preserve. Please notice that I suggest you actually schedule that recovery time. Explain to your child that that is what you are doing. It's called "down time," and it's really important for being happy and healthy. The Italians have a wonderful saying: "il dolce far niente," translated as "the sweetness of doing nothing." It's a lesson we can all learn from.

Question

My 6-year-old daughter came home from school saying the other girls in her class don't want her on their soccer team. Can you help me with ways to support her through this first experience with isolation?

—Soccer Mom

Answer

Dear Soccer Mom:

I suspect that not only do you want to support her through this experience, but you're also feeling the pain of her upset. The moment I became a father, I remember going into instinctual nurturing and

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It's Never Too Early To Read

BY BRONWYN PARHAD

It's never too early to read...and sing. What? Did you think that I've confused music and reading? Not a bit. Did you know that you can "sing" a book? Definitely. I attended an incredible workshop at the Public Library Association conference this past spring which talked about using music to promote early childhood literacy. It was at this workshop that I decided to try it at my story times, by using old favorites and singing the text instead of reading it. For example, you may sing the words to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* using the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Go ahead, try it! You may also use favorite rhymes or finger plays such as "5 Little Monkeys" and add the tune of "Happy Birthday." There are numerous ways to add music to the stories you read and to the everyday activities you do by using rhythmic repetitive rhymes, such as "5 Little Monkeys" which demonstrates counting and sequencing. Even the smallest children will begin to anticipate and move to the beat.

Researchers Rebecca Pariakian and Claire Lerner, in their article "Beyond Twinkle, Twinkle: Using Music with Infants and Toddlers" in the March 2010 issue of *Young Children*, speak to the ways that music experiences support children's early learning. Babies as young as 8 months old are able to remember familiar rhymes or music and move to the beat or cadence. When I present the Bright Beginnings baby story



time at the library, I use nursery rhymes, songs, finger plays, and music CDs, as well as books. I have seen the children (probably some of YOUR children!), begin to anticipate the movement and motions to the rhymes after very few sessions. The rhyme, rhythm and repetition are the keys. The repetition may seem boring to you, but your little one is using that repetition to learn.

Researchers at the University of York published findings in the March 15, 2010 Proceedings of the National Academy of

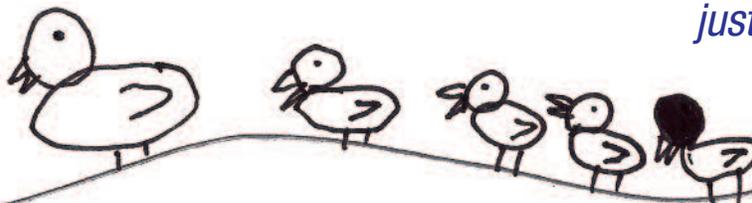
Science, which stated that infants respond to tempo and rhythm of music, finding that more engaging than speech. They go on to say that it is the beat which produces the response in infants. Add some clapping, or bouncing, or shakers and bells, and you have a win-win situation. With older children, the creativity comes into play when you take an old favorite such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and encourage your child to sing new words, such as "Honk, Honk, Honk Your Horn."

Researchers Cathy Fink and March Marxer, in their NAEYC for Families online article give us "10 Ways Babies Learn When We Sing To Them." Language itself is musical, and when we sing, talk and read to our children, they learn new words and communication, as well as rhyme and rhythm.

All in all, read to your children, sing to your children, move with them, and above all, remember that it's never too early to read (and sing). ■

Bronwyn Parhad, MLS, is the head of Youth Services at the Winnetka-Northfield Public Library and serves as the library's representative on The Alliance board of directors.

3-year-old Maeve stated, "Mom, ducks don't actually cry when they are sad. They just say, "Quack, quack."



protection mode. I wanted to absorb all my son's pain so that he wouldn't have to. I've since calmed down and even had something of a paradigm shift regarding how my son experiences pain and disappointment.

Your daughter is experiencing rejection as much as isolation, both deeply painful parts of the human condition. There are several ways to help our children through experiences like this. Start with empathy, and let her know that you understand her feelings of sadness and/or anger. There's an important distinction here between empathy and sympathy. Empathizing means you understand your child's feelings. You've been there. Sympathizing is simply feeling sorry for what she's going through. We parent best in a state of empathy, as it puts us in an excellent position to pass on wisdom.

Let your daughter know that it's okay that she feels hurt. We often think of negative feelings as bad, but in the appropriate circumstances they are actually a good, authentic way of being.

"Why do clouds make pictures, Dad?" asks 3-year-old Frances.



Your daughter's ability to be resilient is at the heart of this issue. As I mentioned, my paradigm has shifted as my son's gotten older. He and I now talk about the character quality of grit and getting through difficult times especially with problems that can't be easily solved. Help your daughter understand that her sad feelings will dissipate with time and that, even though it feels bad, it will get better. She'll learn that she can get through tough times and that's a good outcome. Resilience at a young age is a gift.

When we soothe every pain and solve every problem, we raise narcissistic unhappy children. With that said, let's get into how to help and guide her through all of this with two basic avenues: Resilience and Problem Solving, in that order.

Four Lessons for Resilience

1. She is learning that all emotions are dynamic. She won't always feel sad and that increases her ability to tolerate discomfort.
2. She doesn't rate herself based on the opinions of others.
3. She knows that she will be okay if she has to be alone.
4. She knows that she has a team around her that she can always count on – family, teachers and other friends.

Potential solutions to the problem at hand:

- * She will need to make a decision from imperfect choices. That is life, and will be an amazing lesson for her to learn.

- * She courageously finds her voice and tells the other girls how they made her feel.
- * She considers other soccer options with different girls.
- * She plays another sport.
- * She vows not to treat others that way, thus building her quality of compassion.

If your daughter becomes more resilient and builds better problem-solving skills as a result of this experience, then it can be transformed into a valuable lesson, one that will improve her capacity for happiness in the long run.

Question

My children struggle with the transition to sleep. After our family ritual of bath time, reading books and saying good night, they frequently leave their beds and rooms. Can you recommend some ideas to help our family?

—Tired Dad

Answer

Dear Tired Dad:

I really like that you have a consistent ritual before bedtime and that is a critical component of good sleep hygiene. First, the good news: They will eventually grow out of this with time. Further, it's normal behavior and is not an indication that there are any problems with them or your parenting.

It's helpful to understand why they frequently get out of bed so that you can be empathetic and less frustrated. When children don't fall asleep and get out of bed, it's normally one of several reasons:

Continued on page 7

- * They are bored. Young children typically don't self-soothe, and so they're seeking stimuli.
- * With nothing to distract them, they get anxious, and when they get anxious and energized, they can't fall asleep.
- * They know that people are up and doing things and simply want to be part of the action.
- * They are over-tired which actually revs them up.

Your parenting goal here is to help them relax and self-soothe once they get into bed. The next time they get out of bed first, stay calm and then bring them back to bed and gently encourage them to go to sleep. Remind them of the benefits of great sleep – for a child, more sleep means more energy the next day for more fun!



Eight strategies to help children have a great bedtime.

1. Start the bedtime rituals early, about two hours before bedtime. Keep the vibe calm, slow, and quiet.
2. Keep the routine the same every night. Be consistent and predictable.
3. Realize that bedtime can be the very best part of the day to connect with your child. I often find that my son is more open at bedtime. I often sit on the side of the bed, not saying a word or asking any questions. Let your child take the lead on any topic; you will be surprised at what comes from that. Resist the urge to answer or solve issues. Listen and if there are upsetting issues that arise, assure them that tomorrow is a fresh start and nothing needs to be solved tonight.
4. Early bed times are best for great sleep; keeping them up later will not make them fall asleep sooner.
5. Set up their bedroom to be cozy and try to keep their bed for sleep, not play. When a child associates the bed with play, getting in it can rev them up rather than put them to sleep.
6. If you give your child a bedtime snack, keep it simple and not too exciting. Warm milk, toast, or a slice of turkey may be best.
7. Make sure your child is getting plenty of movement and exercise during the daytime.
8. If you are tired, don't lie down and fall asleep with them. Sit on the edge of the bed.

If it's past their bedtime and they continue to get up, then just sit either in their room or outside their door. Tell them that there is no more reading and to just breathe deeply. You might rub their backs for a few minutes to help soothe them. Remember that bedtime can be an anxious time for little ones, so stay calm and don't get frustrated.

Many parents like to be in bed and asleep by about 10pm for their own schedule. It's easy for us to get frustrated when we are sleep-deprived ourselves and our little ones are staying up later than we are! With all of the demands on your time as a parent, it's natural to want to be done and off-duty later at night. In truth, it doesn't always work that way. Despite having great bedtime routines, some children are not good sleepers, just as some adults are not. Have realistic expectations about bedtime and let your child know (and remind yourself) that bedtime will continue to improve with time. ■

**Have a question you would like addressed?
Submit it to lsullivan@TheAllianceForEC.org.**

“When you are big like me, you are called a kid. When people get bigger, they are called grownups. Grownups get to do things like computers and turn on the lights. I'll be a grownup in two weeks, and then I can do things like you, Mom.”

– Henry, 3-years-old

Early Childhood Community Calendar

2014

There is a great deal going on in our community for parents and educators of young children! For fuller descriptions of many of these activities and events, as well as additional listings, please visit www.TheAllianceForEC.org/earlychildhoodcalendar.php.

ONGOING

French School Admissions. The French School is a total French immersion preschool/kindergarten. Now accepting applications for the 2015-16 school year.

Ronald Knox Montessori Coat Drive (throughout the first half of the school year).

Winnetka Covenant Preschool 2015-16 Registration and Playgroups. WCP offers Preschool & Junior Kindergarten programs, as well as FREE open playgroups.

OCTOBER 2014

15 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity All-School Mass & Open House. Mass at 8:45 am, Open House at 10 am. FHC offers a Mom and Tots Program, Pre-Kindergarten, ½ and Full Day Junior Kindergarten and SK-8 grades.

17 The Alliance for Early Childhood - American Red Cross Babysitting Course. 9:00am-3:30pm. Junior high students learn how to be effective and competent babysitters through this all-day course facilitated by Stephanie Figlioli, PT. \$125. To register, call Stephanie at (847) 784-5036.

18 Winnetka Public School Nursery - 20th Annual Pumpkinfest. 10am-2pm, Village Green Park, Winnetka.

18 Plaza del Lago Fall Festival. 11am-2pm. Plaza del Lago, Wilmette.

20 Willow Wood Preschool Registration for 2015-16 will begin for new families. WW offers Parent-Tot, 2 year old, 3 year old, 4 year old and Junior Kindergarten programs plus Lunch Bunch, Extended Day and enrichment opportunities.

20 Winnetka Park District - Outdoor Adventures. Mondays, Oct. 20th – Nov. 10th from 3-4pm; 4-9 year olds; \$20. Registration required.

21 Winnetka Park District - Magic! 5:30-6:25pm; 5-12 year olds; \$20. Registration required.

23 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity - The Organized Child: Building Effective Functions with Dr. Georgia Bozeday, Ed.D., 7-8:30pm, FHC auditorium. Registration required.

23 FAN - Andrew Solomon, Ph.D.: Depression, Too, is a Thing with Feathers. 7pm, New Trier High School, Winnetka Campus.

24 Northfield Park District - Boo Bash. 6:00-7:30p.m., Northfield Community Center. FREE, rain or shine.

24 Sacred Heart School Preschool - Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Open House. 9:30-11:30am. Winnetka.

25 Linden Square Pumpkin Walk. 11am-1pm, 4th & Linden, Wilmette.

25 Winnetka Park District: Pumpkin Carving. 1:00-2:30pm; 4-15 year olds; \$15. Registration required.

29 The Alliance for Early Childhood - Beyond Time Out: Dealing with Challenging Behaviors. 9:30-11:00am, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. Free, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

29 The Alliance for Early Childhood's Professional Development Workshop - Why Won't They Sit at Circle Time?! 1:00-2:30pm, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. Free, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

29 Sacred Heart School Preschool, Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Open House. 7-8pm., Winnetka.

NOVEMBER 2014

1 A Joyful Noise Preschool Registration Opens for 2015-16 school year.

1 Ronald Knox Montessori - 4th Annual Parent Education Workshop. 9am-2pm, Ronald Knox Montessori School. Open event featuring a variety of speakers discussing issues pertaining to Montessori philosophy, children's education, and parenting as a whole.

1 Fun with Science! 10:00-11:30am, Wilmette Public Library Auditorium. Ages 3 to 6 with an adult.

3 Winnetka Public School Nursery - New Family Enrollment Begins.

5 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour, after 8:45am All School Mass.

6 A Joyful Noise Preschool Open House. 7-9pm. Kenilworth Union Church, Kenilworth. AJN programs include morning Junior Kindergarten, 3 year old classes, Younger- and Older-2 year old classes, Moms and Tots Transition, and Beginnings (babies to 24 months), as well as enrichment classes and lunchtime programs.

6 Ronald Knox Montessori Open House. 9-11am, Ronald Knox Montessori School.



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7 Winnetka Park District – Family Campfire. 6:15-7:45pm; families; \$5/per person, Crow Island Woods. Registration required.

11 A Joyful Noise Preschool Tour. 9:30am.

13 The Alliance for Early Childhood – Encouraging Adventure: Redefining Success to Include Risk, featuring Joan Almon. 9:30-11:00am, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. FREE, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

13 The Alliance for Early Childhood's 25th Anniversary Celebration. 6:30pm. Indian Hill Club, Winnetka.

14 FAN - William Deresiewicz, Ph.D.: Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life. 7pm, New Trier High School, Northfield Campus.

15 Winnetka Park District: Tiny Tot Olympics. 10-11am; 3-5 year olds; FREE.

18 Ronald Knox Montessori Open House. 9-11am, Ronald Knox Montessori School.

22 Wilmette Holiday Parade. 10:30am. Starting from 4th & Linden.

26 Winnetka Park District – Santa's Mailbox. November 26th – December 19th; all ages; FREE.

DECEMBER 2014

Sacred Heart School Registration Begins for 2015-16 school year. 8am, Winnetka.

3 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour, after 8:45am All School Mass.

4 Winnetka Park District – Magic! 5:00-5:55pm; 5-12 year olds; \$20. Registration required.

6 Northfield Park District – Holiday Winter Fest. 11am-1pm., Northfield Community Center. For children 2-8 year olds.

Northfield Park District – Outdoor Ice at Clarkson Park. Weather permitting; Clarkson Park will house an outdoor ice rink in the winter months.

7 Ronald Knox Montessori Holiday Sing and Toy Drive. 3-5pm, Wilmette Junior High School.

8 FAN – Claude Steel, Ph.D: Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do. 7pm, Evanston Township High School.

9 A Joyful Noise Preschool Tour. 9:30am.

13 Winnetka Park District: Santa Claus is Coming... to Winnetka! 10am-12 noon; all ages; FREE.

16 Winnetka Park District – Gingerbread House Workshop. 5-6pm; 4-9 year olds (younger children allowed with adult); \$25. Registration required.

17 A Joyful Noise Preschool Tour. 9:30am.

18 Sacred Heart School – Candles and Carols. 7pm, Sacred Heart Church, Winnetka.

Winnetka Park District – Winter Camp. Winter break; 4-8 year olds. Registration required.

24 Winnetka Park District: Holiday Sing. 6pm; families; FREE.

JANUARY 2015

10 Northfield Community Nursery School's Saturday Splat! FREE to preschoolers and families (older siblings welcome), 9:30-11am, NFCNS, Northfield.

13 A Joyful Noise Preschool Tour. 9:30am.

14 Ronald Knox Montessori Open House. 9-11am, Ronald Knox Montessori School.

15 Middlefork School Kindergarten Registration. Lobby of Middlefork School between 2-4pm & 6-7pm.

19 The Alliance for Early Childhood – American Red Cross Babysitting Course. 9:00am-3:30pm. Junior high students learn how to be effective and competent babysitters through this all-day course facilitated by Stephanie Figlioli, PT. \$125. To register, call Stephanie at (847) 784-5036.

19 Northfield Park District – Winter Carnival. 11am- 1pm, Clarkson Park.

21 A Joyful Noise Preschool Tour. 9:30am.

21 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour & Catholic Schools Week Celebration, after 8:45am All School Mass.

22 The Alliance for Early Childhood's 25th Annual Networking Dinner. 5:00-7:30pm, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. Dr. Samuel Meisels will present, "Why the Early Years of Life Matter." Invitations sent in early January.

23 The Alliance for Early Childhood: Red-shirting. 9:30-11:00am, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. Dr. Samuel Meisels

ners for their support!

discussing “Redshirting,” the practice of parents holding their children back from kindergarten so they can start school at age 6–older, bigger and more mature than their 5-year-old and peers. FREE, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

25 Sacred Heart School Catholic Schools Week Pancake Breakfast. 10am, Winnetka, following the Family Mass.

28-29 Sacred Heart School Scholastic Book Fair. Winnetka.

Winnetka Park District: Winter Carnival. January (Date TBA); families; FREE.

FEBRUARY 2015

4 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour, after 8:45am All School Mass.

5 Winnetka Park District – Daddy/Daughter Date Night. 6-8pm; 4-10 year olds; \$60 per couple. Registration required.

6 Camp Willow Wood 2015 Registration for current Willow Wood families. Open registration for camp will begin on Friday, February 20.

17 Winnetka Park District – Magic! 5:00-5:55pm; 5-12 year olds; \$20. Registration required.

MARCH 2015

1-7 The Alliance for Early Childhood’s 21st Annual ScreenBreak. Children and their families are encouraged to turn off their televisions and other screens for a week, and enjoy alternative activities at home or at events coordinated throughout the community.

1 The Alliance for Early Childhood’s Screen-Break Kick-Off Event.

4 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour, after 8:45am All School Mass.

5 Winnetka Park District - Mother/Son Date Night. 6-8pm; 4-10 year olds; \$60 per couple. Registration required.

7 Winnetka Public School Nursery – Wonder of Discovery. 9-11:30am.

11 The Alliance for Early Childhood – Strategies for Using Technology at Home: Part 1 (Webinar). 9:30-11:00am. Facilitated by Erikson Institute’s TEC Center. FREE, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

18 The Alliance for Early Childhood – Strategies for Using Technology at Home: Part 2 (In-Person). 1:00-2:30pm, Church of the Holy

Comforter, Kenilworth. Facilitated by Erikson Institute’s TEC Center. FREE, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

18 The Alliance for Early Childhood’s Professional Development Workshop - Strategies for Using Technology in the Classroom and to Foster Family Engagement. 3:45-5:15pm, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. Facilitated by Erikson Institute’s TEC Center. FREE, RSVP at www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

25-26 Sacred Heart School - Junior Tower Players. 7pm, Winnetka.

APRIL 2015

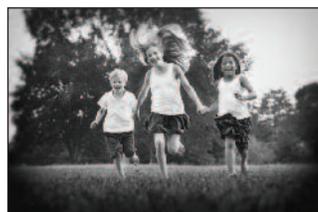
1 The School of Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School Tour, after 8:45am All School Mass.

1 Sacred Heart School – Washing of the Feet and Living Stations of the Cross. 9:15am and 11am, Sacred Heart Church, Winnetka.

4 Northfield Park District – Egg- Stravaganza at Clarkson Park. 10:30-11:00am. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held at the Community Center.

4 Winnetka Park District – Egg Hunt. 10am (sharp); 2-8 year olds; FREE.

30 The Alliance for Early Childhood – Transition to Kindergarten Meeting. 9:30-10:30am, Skokie School, Winnetka. Parents of incoming kindergarten students and families who are new to District 36 learn about the District’s history and philosophy, as well as what to expect during the kindergarten year.



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During my twenty years of teaching, we occasionally experienced a mild injury that could be handled with a simple bandaid. The children learned from their mistakes and rarely repeated them. I became convinced that when children are given visible risk they rise to it and become very competent. On the other hand, hazards are to be avoided. Hazards are invisible risks that children can't see such as broken glass on an otherwise clean lawn, or a malfunction on a piece of playground equipment. Because children do not see the hazards, they cannot risk-assess them. Thus, protecting children from hazards is the responsibility of adults. But providing opportunities for children to experience age-appropriate risk is also the responsibility of adults.

There are some guidelines when offering children adventurous play opportunities. It's best not to encourage children to climb higher than they are prepared to go, nor hold them back if they seem centered and in charge of themselves. We don't want to override their growing ability to risk-assess. It's also best not to place a child in a tree or up in a jungle gym, for example. If they didn't climb themselves, they have trouble assessing the risks involved in climbing higher or getting down.

I also learned that one has to confront one's own fears of risk and practice risk assessment as a teacher. For example, I took my class to a nearby park each week, and the children loved to build dams across a shallow, narrow part of the creek. One day we were playing at a wider, deeper part the stream and six-year-old Peter said he wanted to leap out to the flat rock in the middle so he and his friends could build a

dam. It seemed a fairly big distance to the rock, and I was sure he'd fall into the stream. I nearly refused to let him make the jump, but he seemed so confident that I stopped myself and did my own risk-assessment. What if he does fall in? The water is not too deep for him. It's a warm day so he won't catch cold. We're two blocks from school, and we have extra shoes and clothes there for him to change into. And his mother knows what it's like to raise adventurous children so she won't be upset by the news that he fell in the creek. "Go ahead," I said. He made the leap, tottered a bit as he landed, but regained his balance. His friends started



passing him fairly heavy stones which he carefully placed in the creek, while all of the children were leaning precariously over the water but never falling in or even getting wet. All of this good play would have been lost if Peter had not been allowed to take a risk.

Fortunately, there is growing interest in giving children more opportunities for playing in nature, and this means they will encounter more risk. It also means that teachers, parents, parks directors, and others should take a fresh look at risk and observe how well children handle it.

To get a clearer picture of adventurous play and risk, the U.S. Alliance for Childhood

commissioned a study that included interviews with play experts and directors of adventure playgrounds. These playgrounds provide adventuresome play opportunities for school-age children, such as fast moving zip lines, building materials and tools for constructing play houses (often two or even three stories tall), barrels for rolling down hills, rafts for navigating ponds, and large mud holes for digging and splashing in.

Adventure playgrounds look like a child's dream but an insurance company's nightmare. The Alliance learned, though, that insurance companies in the U.S. do not charge parks departments extra for having an adventure playground. This is because accident rates are the same or lower than at typical playgrounds, and law suits are very rare.

A larger study of adventure playgrounds in England concluded that the accident record of adventure playgrounds is far better than that of other forms of playgrounds. These and other findings are summarized in a new U.S. Alliance for Childhood publication, "Adventure: The Value of Risk in Children's Play," available through Amazon. The report's overall message: Provide oversight but let children play freely and in adventuresome ways. They'll become skilled in risk-assessment and have surprisingly few injuries or other problems. And they will learn a lot more and have a lot more fun—and so will the adults with them! ■

SAVE THE DATE

To hear Joan Almon address Encouraging Adventure: Redefining Success to Include Risk, join us on November 13, 2014 from 9:30-11am at Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth. For more information and to register, visit www.TheAllianceForEC.org.

STEP TWO:

- **Expanding the Experiential Base**
– **Implementing Guided Practice**

The next important step in this learning adventure usually involves the child taking greater control of the experience with some type of three-wheeled vehicle -- a tricycle, big wheels, etc. Again, this stage of bike riding is based on using a sturdy foundation to continue developing skills in a safe setting. However, the skill-acquisition process is now taking a turn toward greater independence. The child is now much less reliant on the will of others.

In executive functions terminology, the child is practicing skills or developing automaticity (motor memory) through routines. For example, in the case of bike riding, the child is perfecting the ability to pedal, to steer, etc. The adult is providing feedback and stepping in more directly, as needed. Once greater proficiency is attained, the child is ready to make a smooth transition to the next step.

STEP THREE:

- **Transitioning from External to Internal Control**
– **Encouraging More Independent Guided Practice**

Next in bike riding, the three-wheeled bike gives way to two large wheels plus two smaller “training” wheels. While the total wheel count is higher (now at four) the overall riding experience for the child is less sturdy at its base. The main responsibility for success is now relying increasingly on the child.

This series of changes in support, shifting emphasis from the external to the internal, represents a successful scaffolding progression. As the child becomes more proficient, the adults focus less on adult-centered action and more on child-centered support. The adults are working toward that moment of “letting go” in both a literal and a symbolic sense.

In executive functions terminology, this stage is indicative of spiraled learning, building on the previously attained skill sets to achieve higher-level understanding and more complex abilities like strategic thinking and problem solving. The key to success at this stage is greater emphasis on the child’s assuming more self-direction. The parent/teacher role is evolving to be more indirect, more of a “Guide on the Side.”

STEP FOUR:

- **Striving For Autonomy**
– **Supporting Internal Motivation**

Finally, we have reached the end-point in this representation of a common story, the point at which the adult is holding on to the back of the bike (now *sans* training wheels), running at the pace set by the child’s pedaling, and trying to decide when to let go. This place in time is what I earlier referenced as the “magic moment.” It represents the successful culmination of the learning experience for both the adult and the child. If the adult lets go too soon, the child may fall. (This type of “falling” should be regarded as a completely normal part of the learning process. In this event, parents and teachers encourage the child to keep trying, assuring the child that he/she will soon be successful.) On the other hand, if the adult holds on too long, the child’s long-fought-for sense of balance and independence may be jeopardized, possibly resulting, again, in the child falling. (In my opinion, the experience of falling under these circumstances may leave the child in a more fragile state, less certain of his/her capabilities.) The moment at which the child is able to ride the bike independently is the highest point in this example of the scaffolding process. In executive functions terminology, the child has Reached the Goal as a result of accomplishing the Action Steps required in areas of skill acquisition and knowledge attainment. Often this stage embodies significant development in areas of social-emotional growth as well.

Take-away summary points:

1. Young children begin developing executive function skills from birth on. The natural approach to learning is through establishing foundations for understanding based on experiences, then building to more complex abilities through scaffolding.
2. The rate and type of the child’s development of these critical skills and behaviors (e.g., strategic thinking, self-control, problem solving) are dependent in large part upon the child’s participation in these scaffolding experiences.
3. Through this process, the child comes to understand that hard work and persistence pay off. The child connects learning with his/her own effort, in conjunction with the acquisition of knowledge.
4. Through sensitivity to the process of scaffolding, adults learn to recognize the child’s increasingly independent application of learning. Parents and teachers often marvel at these peak learning moments, stating how the child is “really growing up!”

Einstein famously said that “Life is like riding a bike: To keep your balance you must keep moving.” I would add that by carefully scaffolding the steps to master the skills and activities, including providing time to reflect and grapple, parents and teachers can greatly influence the child’s quality of achievement and overall self-confidence as a learner. ■

Dr. Georgia Bozeday is the Director of Educational Services at Rush NeuroBehavioral Center. Dr. Bozeday has served as a speech/language therapist, resource and gifted teacher, as well as Director of Student Services and Assistant Superintendent for Sunset Ridge School District #29.



Suggested Reading:

For Teachers:

Zone of Proximal Development (free white paper), www.childrensprogress.com

For Parents:

Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding, Tools of the Mind, www.toolsofthemind.org/philosophy/scaffolding/

2014 Teacher Tributes

The following educators have been honored with an Alliance for Early Childhood Teacher Tribute, received between October 1, 2013 and October 1, 2014.

Congratulations to all!

- The Teachers at Northfield Community Nursery School
- 4th & 7th Grade Sunset Ridge Teachers
- All Progressive Educators in District 36 Winnetka Public Schools
- Patty AcriWillow Wood Preschool
- Steve AgouridisSkokie School
- Joanna AmaralHubbard Woods School
- Shannon Anderson ...Skokie School
- Sara AngresBaker Demonstration School
- Jennifer ArraJoseph Sears School
- Hollis BabblesSts. Faith, Hope & Charity
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| Josselyn Center for Mental Health | June Aimen |
| Junior League of Evanston-North Shore | Beth Kauffman |
| Kenilworth Park District | Justin Constantino (Advisory Board) |
| Kenilworth School District 38 Board of Edu. | Suzanne Nelson |
| Middlefork School | Erin Charchut |
| Music Institute of Chicago | Reagan Brasch (Advisory Board) |
| Northfield Community Nursery School | Libby Galin |
| Northfield Park District | George Axeloff |
| North Shore Country Day School | Jennifer Larsen |
| NSSD | Nancy Kind |
| NSSRA | Jerry Barton (Advisory Bd) |
| Sacred Heart School | Kristy Burden |
| Safe Haven School | Holly Schaefer |
| Saints Faith, Hope & Charity School | Mary Nomellini |
| Joseph Sears School | Mindy Kelly & Mari Pagone |
| The Volunteer Center | Barb Tubekis (Advisory Bd) |
| Willow Wood Preschool | Megan Weisberg |
| Wilmette/Kenilworth Chamber of Commerce | Nada Becker |
| Winnetka Community House | Patti Schmidt (Advisory Bd) |
| Winnetka Community Nursery School | Kathy Hardy & Liz Burke |
| Winnetka Covenant Preschool | Linnea Johnson & Ursula Arsenault |
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| Winnetka/Northfield Chamber of Commerce | Terry Dason (Advisory Bd) |
| Winnetka/Northfield Public Library | Bronwyn Parhad |
| Winnetka Park District | Toby Ross (Advisory Bd) |
| Winnetka Public School Nursery | Erin Blitz |
| Winnetka Public Schools | Trisha Kocanda & Alison Hawley |

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- | | |
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| Kid-Motion | Sara Knight & Natalie Todd |

ASSOCIATE MEMBER SCHOOLS

- Baker Demonstration School, Wilmette
 Christian Heritage Academy, Northfield
 Glencoe Jr. Kindergarten, Glencoe
 Glencoe Park District, Glencoe
 Harkness House for Children, Winnetka
 Harper School Kindergartens, Wilmette
 Ravinia Nursery School, Highland Park
 Ronald Knox Montessori, Wilmette
 Rose Hall Montessori, Wilmette
 St. Francis Xavier School, Wilmette
 Trinity Church Nursery School, Wilmette
 Wilmette Child Development Center, Wilmette
 Wilmette Community Nursery School, Wilmette

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Your Holiday Family Photo Benefits The Alliance, Too!

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Lenswork Studio in Winnetka is a boutique studio specializing in timeless portraiture and candid wedding documentary. Its work has frequently been published in several North Shore magazines and social media outlets. Tao Zhang, a Winnetka resident of more than 20 years, is the chief photographer of the studio. His passion for creating unforgettable images is evident in his portfolio at www.lensworkstudio.com.

This offer is for a limited time only – between November 1st and November 15th. To take advantage and to help The Alliance, too, please contact Tao at [847.784.0203](tel:847.784.0203) or go to www.lensworkstudio.com to arrange for your session today.



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