

## Research on Early Childhood: Short summaries and links

### Children's right to free play

Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that the child has the right to time for free play. However, since many people, including those in government, don't really understand what constitutes free play, they respond by offering organized play. "In general, where investment is made, it is in the provision of structured and organized activities, **but equally important is the need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.**" This sentence is from a commentary to Article 31, written by a group of researchers in an effort to better explain young children's need for free play. The 23-page commentary was published this year and may be helpful to share with those who don't yet understand the fundamental importance of free play.

"Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but **play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms**, either in groups or alone"

Read the whole comment: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ef9bcc4.html>



The "International Play Association" welcomed the publication of this commentary by producing the poster above in order to promote the importance of play. Here is their website: <http://ipaworld.org/>

### The Importance of Outdoor Play

More and more teachers and childhood specialists agree that it is very important for physical and mental health that children can play more time in nature. On the BBC website you can read an article about the "Wild Network" – a collaboration of almost 400 organizations. "Children are being urged to take back their "wild time", swapping 30 minutes of screen use for outdoor activities." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-24670232>. The BBC also reported on a study which showed the "increasing lack of contact and experience with nature among modern children. This is having a negative impact on their health, education and behavior." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24532638>

### Causes of aggressiveness

Many people think that young children from birth to three are passive and unaware. A recent study shows that "aggression in school-age children may have its origins in children 3 years old and younger who witnessed violence between their mothers and partners" [http://blog.case.edu/think/2013/06/17/cwru\\_study\\_finds\\_babies\\_witnessing\\_violence\\_show\\_aggression\\_later\\_in\\_school](http://blog.case.edu/think/2013/06/17/cwru_study_finds_babies_witnessing_violence_show_aggression_later_in_school)

### **Use of mobile devices by children under two**

With the spread of mobile devices which are becoming easier and easier to use, children from birth to three are now increasingly exposed to screens: "Over the last two years, the shift has been drastic. Among children under 2, the survey found that 38 percent had used mobile devices like iPhones, tablets, or Kindles — the same share as children 8 and under who had used such technology in a similar survey two years ago." Despite the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics that children under 2 should have no screen time.

Read the article in the New York Times: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/28/us/new-milestone-emerges-babys-first-iphone-app.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/28/us/new-milestone-emerges-babys-first-iphone-app.html?_r=1&)

### **Regular bedtime is good for learning**

Waldorf EC teachers have known for 90 years how important it is for children to have regular bedtimes. A recent study found: "at age 7, not having a regular bedtime was related to lower cognitive test scores."

Read the abstract of the study: <http://jech.bmjjournals.org/content/67/11/926>

### **Does Waldorf education support health?**

A study published in September comes to the result: "symptom burden from some current health complaints was reported less by former Steiner school attendees" Read the abstract:

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0073135>