Towers, Tents, and Tricycles:

Embracing Adventure Playground Risks
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Remembering Childhood: Returning to Play

• Remember a time when you were very young and playing. You were having the best time.
• Where were you?
• Who was there? Were there other children or adults?
• What made it so special and so fun?
• Take a couple minutes to share and reflect in small groups.
What do Adventure Playgrounds look like and where did this idea come from?
What does a Temporary Adventure Playground Look Like and How is it Different from Other Playscapes?

• Takes place in a shorter period of time rather than over a longer duration of time in an established location.
• Facilitators and Playworkers do not necessarily develop long standing relationships and skill building with visitors.
• Less exploration of risk due to limited skill building.
• Often smaller in scale.
How are Temporary Adventure Playgrounds and Adventure Playgrounds Similar?

- Children lead freely chosen actions with minimal adult intervention.
- Playworkers and facilitators are conducting risk assessments and checking sites for hazards.
- Kids are amazing and make awesome things; adults get to watch that happen and sometimes be involved in helping out.
- The materials introduced affect the children’s actions.
- Play!
What Should Grownups do during a Temporary Adventure Playground?

• Watch and Listen.
• Take Documentation.
• Check for Hazards, conduct Risk Assessments.
• Distract other grownups who want to intervene or adulterate children’s play.
• Reset materials, look for ways to be a friendly ghost. Respond to play cues.
Adult Motives and Agendas (Adulteration of Play)

• Check in with yourself (and other adults) through the play experience.
• Ask why:
  • Why does that type of play make me uncomfortable?
  • Are my reasons about safety or mostly adult comfort?
  • Have I done my mental risk assessment?
  • Am I distracting from the children’s play or taking it over to create my play? If so, why?
  • Is my concern or idea still justified after I have examined my motives?
Impact on Guests

Social Play

Physical Awareness

Cognitive Skills
Impact on Team

Developed New Facilitation Techniques

Sharpened Observation and Reflection Skills
Developed New Facilitation Techniques: Intentional Language

- Understanding how language can limit play
- Word selection is important
- New redirection phrases
- Use of open-ended questions
- Terminology that helps…”big kid tool”
- Respond to play cues
Developed New Facilitation Techniques: Interacting with Adults

- Greeting- set expectations
  - ”We ask that the adults take a step back and support the play.”
- Help adults step back
- Remove barrier of adulteration of the play
- Model the preferred adult behavior
- Use small talk to distract
- Narrate what the child is doing to educate the parent about the skills the child is practicing
Developed New Facilitation Techniques: Tool Use

- Learning how to use tools
- Tool safety
- How to teach guest to use tool
- Assessing when guest is ready for a tool
Tool Safety

• Tools are kept in tool apron of Play Facilitator
• Check in with parents
• Offer safety gloves and goggles
• Demo the proper way to use the tool
• Review safety steps with child
  • Keep fingers tucked in
  • Ask people standing too close to step back
  • Ensure no one is inside the box you are working on
  • Cut away from yourself
• Let the kid hold the nail while hammering
• Help brace the material
When can a tool be used?

Require Play Facilitator Supervision:
• Surgical Scissors
• Stapler
• Hammer and Nails
• Miter Box Saw
• Mallet
• Cardboard Cutter
• Box Cutter

No Supervision Required:
• Tape
• String/Rope
• Zip Ties
When do you know a child is ready for a tool?

- They will ask for the tool by name
- Watch Body Language and Play Cues:
  - Are they focused and intentional?
  - How do they handle their bodies?

What if the child is not ready for the tool?

- Ask them what they are wanting to accomplish or have them draw it out with their finger.
- Then use the tool to do it for them.
Impact on Team

Team sharpened their observation and reflection skills by using documentation strategies.
DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY: JOURNAL

Take a step back from the play to become an observer.

Using a notebook and camera, the observer records the child’s conversations, skills, play cues, risk assessments, etc.

Also write about your own personal feelings concerning an interaction or observation to be used for self-reflection.
Write down your observations or record conversations for these areas

Social/Emotional Skills: collaboration, empathy, sharing
Cognitive Skills: creative thinking, problem solving, concentration, innovation
Risk Assessments: how are they testing things to see if they are safe
Physical Skills: fine motor and gross motor

Big difference between adult-built structures and child-built structures:
Adults – less stable, higher up, bigger
Kids – lower to the ground, smaller
different shapes than tape
DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY: PHOTOGRAPHY

- Get faces to capture emotions and reactions
- Take photos from different angles
- Take a mix of candid and posed pictures
- Zoom in for pictures of individuals
- Capture broad views of the entire space or whole play scene
- Revisit a structure to capture different stages of development
- Experiment with your style of photography
- Photograph other team members facilitating and documenting
- Take series of photos to tell the story
Create time to REFLECT on your documentation.

Reflection leads to personal and professional growth

Reflect on…

• Interactions that did not have the expected outcome
  • Uncomfortable situations
  • Surprising moments
• Play cues and facilitation strategies
"What do you think makes a good playground?"
"This!"
"What else?"
"Just this."
The chamber of Secrets has been opened.

enemies of the heir... beware.

the chamber of secrets has been opened
No rules… except
RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT
Before deciding if a risk is “acceptable,” we consider:

- The likelihood of coming to harm
- The severity of that harm
- The benefits, rewards or outcomes of that activity
Risk Benefit Assessment allows us to:

identify potential hazards
and then assess them against their play-related benefit.
Dynamic RBA (in the moment)  Planning RBA (before planning a space)
Risk

Hazard
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Hazards</th>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Safety measures</th>
<th>Further action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical development</td>
<td>Dead or weak branches</td>
<td>Falling- death or serious injury</td>
<td>Knowledge of children’s individual abilities/approaches</td>
<td>Contact arboricultural expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Rough bark</td>
<td>Scratching</td>
<td>Restrictions in place First Aid on hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessment skills; Test of own abilities</td>
<td>Height from ground</td>
<td>Vertigo/getting scared</td>
<td>Supervision by risk-aware and fit-to-climb playworkers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of achievement</td>
<td>Awkward branches</td>
<td>Getting stuck</td>
<td>Risk assessment gone through with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of nature</td>
<td>Fearless child</td>
<td>Going beyond ability</td>
<td>Trees and ground checked for suitability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Hazards</td>
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<td>Safety measures</td>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of singing</td>
<td>Singing badly</td>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>Knowledge of individual children’s character</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to show or develop ability</td>
<td>Not being able to sing</td>
<td>Ridicule</td>
<td>Playworkers who are prepared to make fools of themselves on occasion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Moving awkwardly</td>
<td>Being laughed at</td>
<td>Safe atmosphere created</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying out adult culture</td>
<td>Drying up part way through</td>
<td>Distant supervision and intervention if necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accompanying children who ask or show need for support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of social skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chance to be silly</td>
<td></td>
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Your Turn to Play!
Reflection Time

• Resources:
  • Where the Wild Things Play
  • The Land (Film by Erin Davis)
  • Inside a European Adventure Playground
  • Pop-Up Adventure Playgrounds

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