

PROVIDING RISKY PLAY IN ECE SETTINGS

A facilitated discussion about providing risky play in ECE settings.
Examples will be shared and discussion points generated from a recent research project AJ has completed.



Figure 1 . Heights – ECOS (Jensen, 2015 p. 78)

Background and research



Figure 2. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 85)

What is risk-taking play?

- Elements of risk taking play:
- “...thrilling and exciting forms of play that involve a risk of physical injury” (Sandseter, 2009b, p. 93).
- “...overcoming fear” (Stephenson, 2003, p. 36).
- “...attempting something never done before” (Stephenson, 2003, p. 36).
- “...feeling on the borderline of ‘out of control’ often because of height or speed” (Stephenson, 2003, p. 36).
- “...play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about risk” (Little, Sandseter and Wyver, 2012, p. 302).

Rationale for risk-taking play

- Children are naturally driven to seek out and engage in challenging and risk-taking play.



Figure 3. Tuakau Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 94.)

It's so scary



Figure 4. Raglan Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015 p. 62)

Risk assessment

- The ability to view a situation and judge or calculate what the consequences of our actions may be is a vital survival skill (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Tovey, 2007).
- Children need to develop the ability to assess risk.



Figure 5. Te Aroha Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 64)

Mastering physical skills

- Tovey (2007) asserts that the challenges of risk-taking play allows children to “push themselves further and to extend their limits” (p. 104).



Figure 6. ECOS (Jensen, n.d, p. 65)

Practise pays off

- Overcoming fear or the sense of achievement when finally mastering a challenging task, contributes to children's sense of seeing themselves as confident and competent learners (Jensen, 2015, p. 65).



Figure 7. ECOS (Jensen, n.d, p. 75)

What about the boys?

- *Quite often if [the play is] boisterous, if it's noisy, if they're perpetuating perceived aggression we shut it down. But if those are the areas where boys in particular can excel, if we have to harness energies let's harness the energies and let's make it [safer] but let's not ban it. Banning teaches nothing. If we're worried about safety let's talk about safety and let's encourage them to actually master it. But banning, you don't teach anything. It's about learning. (Russell)*



Figure 8. ECOS (Jensen, n.d, p. 84)

They will do it...

...one way or another

Navigating staff attitudes

- Have discussions regarding attitudes to risk.
- Enjoyment of the outdoors
- Communication and compromise
- Avoid a blanket rule



Figure 9. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 72)

My findings regarding teacher attitudes to risk

- Child safety is important but teachers also need to trust children as capable and confident learners.
- “Discussion, compromise, understanding and acceptance of personal comfort levels appear to be key aspects of navigating staff attitudes regarding risky play. Once teachers understand their personal limits for risk they may need to set them aside so they can support children to explore their own limits through risky play”. (Jensen, 2015, p. 70)



Provision for risky play

- Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter (2009a) identifies 6 categories of risky play:
 - Heights
 - Speed
 - Dangerous tools
 - Play near dangerous elements
 - Rough and tumble
 - Play where children can disappear or get lost
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- Sandseter has a blog site where she shares some of her research on children's risky play and well-being in ECE and links to relevant articles:
<http://ellenbeatehansensandseter.com/>

Heights

Figure 13. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 65)



Heights



Figure 14. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 78)



Figure 15. Tuakau Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 90)

Heights



Figure 16. Raglan Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 76)



Figure 17. Raglan Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 78)

Heights



Figure 18. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 65)



Figure 1 . Heights – ECOS (Jensen, 2015 p. 78)

Speed



Figure 19. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 79)



Figure 20. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 79)



Figure 21. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 80)

Speed



Figure 22. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 79)

Dangerous tools



Figure 23. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 81)

Dangerous tools



Figure 24. Raglan Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 81)

Play near dangerous elements



Figure 25. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 82)

Play near dangerous elements



Figure 26. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 83)



Figure 27. Tuakau Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 93)

Rough and tumble



Figure 28. Matapihi Kindergarten (Jensen, 2015, p. 84)

Play where children can disappear or get lost



Figure 29. ECOS (Jensen, 2015, p. 85)

My challenge to you

Think about:

- How does the outdoor environment in your ECE setting reflect the inclusion of risk taking exploration for the children in your care?

Examine:

- Your own attitudes towards risk.

Talk:

- With the teachers you work with about their attitudes towards risk.
- About how you can start providing risk taking experiences for children in your ECE setting.

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