The Value of Risk in Children's Play

Joan Almon

> *Better a broken bone than a broken spirit.*
> – Lady Allen of Hurtwood, founder of adventure playgrounds in England

Eight years ago, when the US Alliance for Childhood began its campaign to restore play to children's lives, we were told repeatedly, "Whatever you do, don't use the word *play*. It's become a four-letter word." We gave it much thought but could find no better word to describe this essential activity. It was time to redeem the word. Since then many articles have appeared in the popular press about play, including cover stories in *The New York Times Magazine* and *Scientific American.* Documentaries have been made, the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued position statements on the importance of play, and new books have appeared on the subject. On the whole, *play* has become an acceptable word again.

Now it is time to tackle another four-letter word—risk. To say that children benefit from risk is almost heresy in the United States. We have become very risk-averse. As Lenore Skenazy, the humorous critic of modern parenting, says in her book, *Free Range Kids,*[1]

> …a lot of parents today are really bad at assessing risk. They see no difference between letting their children walk to school and letting them walk through a firing range. When they picture their kids riding their bikes to a birthday party, they see them dodging Mack trucks with brake problems. To let their children play unsupervised in a park at age eight or ten or even thirteen seems about as responsible as throwing them in the shark tank at Sea World with their pockets full of meatballs.
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> Any risk is seen as too much risk. A crazy, not-to-be-taken, see-you-on-the-local-news risk. And the only thing these parents don't seem to realize is that the greatest risk of all just might be trying to raise a child who never encounters *any* risks. (p. 5)

Gradually, parents, teachers, and other professionals are taking a fresh look at risk. There is a growing recognition that 21st century skills include creativity, invention, resilience, and problem solving. Adventurous, child-initiated play is full of opportunities for developing these capacities, but many children are deprived of the chance to play freely and meet age-appropriate risks. As a result, aspects of their development are often stunted. For example, they frequently lack skills in the use of their hands, and public schools have begun hiring occupational therapists to work with large numbers of children. Also, business leaders tell us that many of the young people they hire have great difficulty in working with others. They may be fine on Facebook but lack face-to-face skills that are essential in the workplace, skills acquired in part through social play on the playground. Professors tell us that their students today need things very clearly spelled out, more so than did previous generations. They lack confidence to deal with uncertainties. All of this has long-term consequences for the children themselves but also for society.

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Waldorf students usually fare better than many others in handling risk, in part because the education is so broad-based and stimulates physical and social development, as well as cognitive development. The close ties among the children within a class strengthen their social capacity, while woodworking, knitting, spacial dynamics, circus skills, eurythmy, and a host of other activities develop the hands and limbs in an integrated way.

Yet even Waldorf students probably have far fewer opportunities to play freely in adventuresome ways than did earlier generations. One way to assess the changes in encountering risk is to ask parents how far they roamed as children and what adventures they had playing without parental oversight. If they are over thirty they probably had quite adventuresome childhoods. Under thirty they may have been allowed to play only in organized sports or under strict adult supervision. But if they played freely as children, one can ask if they would allow their children the same freedom. Almost always the answer is, "No!"

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As modern culture begins to consider the importance of risk, it is a good moment to ask whether Waldorf students of all ages are getting enough opportunities to develop their capacity for meeting risk and dealing with it. Are school playgrounds, for instance, providing children with enough challenges as they go through the grades? Also, are there ways that Waldorf education can contribute to the movement for play and risk by sharing insights and examples?

Understanding Risk

Several years ago the Alliance for Childhood began researching risk in children's play. We identified three levels. The first has a great deal of oversight by adults, and the third requires much practice and often some instruction by adults. The second level is the type of risk children have always sought out and learned to deal with on their own. It is the primary level for which the Alliance is advocating.

1. Challenging activities. These look risky and take courage to do, but they come with plenty of safety features. Examples: Ropes courses and climbing walls where children are harnessed require courage, for they look scary, but the safety features mean that children cannot fall far. Bungee jumping is another example. No skills are needed—just a brave heart and confidence that the company handling the bungee jumps takes safety seriously.

2. Moderate risk. Things could go wrong but generally don't, provided the child has experience in risk-assessment. Examples: zip lines, high climbing equipment, and building forts or play houses with tools. Some skills are needed, but children develop them as they play. Bumps and bruises are part of the learning process and can be expected. Sprains and broken bones also happen on rare occasions. No one wants to see injuries, but fortunately children heal well and are not stopped from play for long.

3. Advanced/extreme risk. These activities require much practice and advanced skills. They are very attractive to teens and young adults who favor extreme risks. Examples: parkour in which young people climb anything in their path, leaping from one place to another and trying not to touch the ground. When taken to extremes, participants leap from building to building across wide divides. Other examples include advanced leaps with skateboards, motorcycle stunts (think Evel Knievel), and cliff diving. Injuries can be serious, but people drawn to this level of risk seem willing to take the chance.

To go deeper into the question of risk, we commissioned a survey that included interviews with directors of adventure playgrounds in California. These playgrounds, described in some detail in this article, provide risky, adventuresome opportunities to build with hammers and nails, to engage with fast-moving zip lines, and much else. The researcher, Halcyon Reese-Learned, also spoke with leading play advocates to gather their views. The survey became the basis of an Alliance publication, *Adventure: The value of risk in children's play.*

The basic findings of the survey contradict a number of myths about play that often serve as barriers to its pursuit.

- Risky play—in contrast to hazardous play—does not lead to high accident rates.
- Park districts that offer adventure playgrounds are not beset by lawsuits.
- Parks that offer adventure playgrounds do not pay higher insurance rates.

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When children are faced with risk, they rise to meet and overcome it. One sees them move cautiously, testing a branch or deciding if they're up to the challenge of the huge slide. Such assessments have been part of human nature, probably from the beginning of human development. Without the capacity to assess, we could not have survived the risks of living in the wild—or even the risks of urban life today.

Through play, children prepare themselves for the risks of life. They play in every environment and with every element, including fire. When I meet with staff from parks departments, in particular, I always ask about the types of play they enjoyed as children. They tended to be very adventuresome. When I ask if they built fires with their friends, about half raise their hands, somewhat sheepishly. They would be appalled to find children building fires on their own today, but it was a common form of play not that long ago. Through it children learned to manage fire and contain it—and to manage themselves at the same time. They knew that if they were too wild in handling fire, serious injury could occur.

Bob Hughes, a play advocate and writer in England, describes playing with the elements as a form of recapitulative play. He sees such play as a vital part of human evolution. He also describes a close connection between such play and another type, which he calls "deep play." In deep play children confront the things they are most fearful of, and this can be scary for adults who are watching. But Hughes describes how children approach such play with surprising caution and rarely experience injuries.

Deep play represents a very real journey on the part of every child who engages in it—whether that journey includes standing up against a bully, climbing to a challenging height, swinging perilously close to solid objects, confronting a phobia. In my experience, it is very rare that children actually injure themselves when they engage in this playtype. They extend their limits gradually and are looking to experience only a representation rather than the reality of death or damage. When they do, it normally means they have either been pushed by someone or have pushed themselves significantly beyond their abilities. This possibility and its potential consequences should act as a serious reminder of the impact of peer pressure (or even playworker pressure), or the development of a culture between children in which they move past risk and engage in foolhardy or potentially suicidal activity of the serial thrill-seeker.[2]

What saves children from serious injury is their ability to weigh risk. This is a capacity to assess the outer risks and match one's own capacities to them. Thus one child may feel secure to climb very high in a tree, as was the case with a five-year-old girl in my first

kindergarten, while others of that age would not dream of taking such a risk. Yet she did it over and over and never came to any harm.

How do children know how to assess risks? The apparently innate ability begins in infancy. With experience it advances all through life. An interesting experiment marked its presence in babies. Researchers Eleanor Gibson and Richard Walk placed six-month-olds who could crawl on a large sheet of Plexiglas with a checkerboard design underneath. As they crawled, the infants came to a point where the checkerboard dropped by a foot or more, although the Plexiglas stayed at the same level. The experiment was originally designed to test depth perception in babies, but the researchers noticed something more. Already at six months the babies recognized risk and showed an ability to assess it. They noticed the drop-off and hesitated while deciding how to navigate it. Some retreated while others cautiously crawled forward, testing the surface to be sure they would not fall down.

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In my own mixed-age kindergarten classes, I watched children assess risks while climbing a tall ladder. Each year during spring housecleaning I brought in an eight-foot stepladder in order to dust the upper walls and ceiling. When I was finished, the children had a chance to climb it. Year after year, I watched children advance up that ladder. As fours they usually went up only a few steps. As sixes they climbed to the top. Sometimes they would go up a step and then back down when they realized it was too high for their current level of ability.

I gave children in my classes as much freedom as I could to climb, tunnel, run, sled, and ski down hills on planks of wood. They chose their own levels of comfort and then advanced slowly. They suffered very few injuries, and I rarely had to intervene to stop them. Occasionally I encouraged children who seemed "stuck" to explore a next level of adventure. Always, their behavior became much better once they had confronted a new challenge and mastered it. Occasionally I had to stop a child who was clearly having a hard time assessing risks. One large three-year-old wanted to keep up with the older children who climbed on tables and built high. After his third fall from the table, I told him he needed to wait a while until he was older. He seemed relieved.

The teacher's role in risk assessment is important. To begin with, the teacher creates the play environment by deciding which equipment, materials, and opportunities are appropriate. One observes, learns, and adjusts the environment over time. Regular inspection of the equipment and grounds is also very important. While children are good at assessing visible risk, they cannot be expected to take hazards into account. A hazard might be broken glass that is not visible or a piece of equipment that is broken or poorly designed.

Joe Frost, a professor emeritus at the University of Texas, is widely recognized as a leader in the play movement. He is a strong advocate for adventuresome play. He has helped research play equipment and has often been called as an expert witness in lawsuits where children have been injured on playgrounds. He notes that the problems are generally from poor design and improper maintenance.

There is a next level beyond risk assessment which is very helpful, and that is risk-benefit analysis. At this level, adults knowingly accept certain risks because the benefits are great. For example, injuries from sports are common, and the CDC reports that 775,000 children ages 14 and under are treated in emergency rooms for sport-related injuries each year. But because the benefits of sports are perceived to be great, the tolerance for injury is also great.

An excellent British publication on risk contains two chapters on risk-benefit analysis. Available online, it is called *Managing Risk in*

Play Provision: Implementation Guide by David Ball, Tim Gill, and Bernard Spiegal. Another British publication on risk by Tim Gill, also online, is called *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society.* These and the Alliance's *Adventure: The value of risk in children's play* provide data and insights that can be very helpful in talking with parents, board members, inspectors, and others about why risk in play is so important and why it does not increase rates of injury.

Obstacles to Risk and Adventuresome Play

One of the most dangerous things we can do in raising and educating children is to deprive them of opportunities to develop their ability to assess risks and build the confidence that goes with that. Many of today's children seem especially fearful of anything uncertain. This is the generation that grew up with helicopter parents who hovered over every aspect of their lives, giving little freedom to take risks or make mistakes. Is the pendulum swinging? We see signs that it is beginning. We cannot afford another generation that is risk-averse and unskilled in assessing risks.

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There are many obstacles that prevent children from playing freely. Chief among them is the widespread, although often unrealistic, fear of stranger danger. It is a tragedy when terrible things happen to children, but the highly dramatic reports in the media keep parents in a constant state of fear, even if their own community has proven to be very safe over long periods of time. Recent surveys of parents show, however, that they want their children to play more freely, but they want some form of supervision to be sure they are kept safe. If handled well, adult oversight and children's free play can go together.

Other obstacles that keep children from playing freely include problems of dense traffic and few sidewalks in some neighborhoods. Many subdivisions have restrictions on children's free play. They cannot build forts or tree houses or even draw chalk on the sidewalks. Many safe neighborhoods often look like ghost towns if one is looking for children at play. Most play activities are to be found instead at organized activities or indoors with screens. At the same time, areas beset by crime pose some real dangers for children, although one does see children playing in groups in daylight hours.

As a result of these obstacles, today's children have few opportunities to play without adult oversight. If parents are courageous enough to let their children outdoors to play, the children rarely find other children to play with. We have also heard from parents who let their school-age children out to play, and who were then visited by the police after neighbors reported them for neglecting their children. It is well worth asking the parents in one's class about their experiences in play and their experiences in letting their own children play. Then one can work with parents on how best to compensate for lost, valuable opportunities for play and risk at home and in school.

Developing Adventuresome Play Spaces

In recent decades playground designers have become more and more safety conscious, with the result that public playgrounds are so tame they rarely appeal to children over five. In the past few years, however, there have been efforts to extend the age range, and one sees more challenging equipment being installed. Yet one could go much further, while still taking basic safety standards into account. Good examples are provided by adventure playgrounds in the US and abroad.

During the German occupation in World War II, Denmark saw a rise in juvenile delinquency. Its answer was unusual: build

more playgrounds. The government consulted with Carl Theodor Sørensen, a Danish landscape architect who had designed many playgrounds before the war. He revisited them and found them largely vacant. Where were the children playing? The answer was in bombed-out building sites. He took his cue from the children and helped create a "junk playground" on the outskirts of Copenhagen. There the children played freely under the benevolent eyes of a "playworker," as such playground staff later came to be known.

From Denmark the idea for such playgrounds was brought to England after the war by Lady Allen of Hurtwood, also a landscape architect. She called them adventure playgrounds, and they have grown to several hundred throughout the UK. They are staffed by trained playworkers who open the sheds, take out the scrap materials called loose parts, and let the children play. Playwork is a profession, and many trainings exist in the UK, ranging from certificate programs to undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Playworkers know a great deal about play and work with children of all ages. They intervene only when needed, for their guiding principles include an understanding that play is "a set of behaviors that are freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated." This means that the ideas for play bubble up from within the children, who then get to choose and direct how they will play. Playworkers help create play environments and then put on their cloaks of invisibility so children can have an experience close to that of earlier generations who played without constant interference from adults. The fine art of playwork lies in knowing when to intervene and when to let children work things out on their own.

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Several years ago, a National Public Radio reporter described what he saw at the Berkeley Adventure Playground,[3] which has been in existence since 1979:

> Scattered around the one-acre lot are at least 15 wooden forts of varying size—some two stories high, others with only two walls. They're all covered in paint, and many bear the names of the children who had a hand in their creation: Sophie, Bobby, Roger, Morita. There are also piles of scrap wood, old boats, fishing-net, tires, you name it.

In a Swiss adventure playground near Zurich called *Holzwurm,* I was intrigued by the three-story buildings the children had constructed. They looked ramshackle and ready to tip over, but that was misleading. Typically children test their houses for safety as they build, and they use so many nails that the structure is not about to fall over. Indeed, when it's time to take one down to make room for more, staff use chain saws to cut them down. Then great bonfires are built!

In the United States there are currently three such playgrounds on the West Coast, run by city parks departments in Huntington Beach, Berkeley, and Mercer Island by Seattle. One might think they are beset by accidents and lawsuits, but the opposite is the case. Insurance companies do not charge parks departments extra for adventure playgrounds, and the two California playgrounds, which are over thirty years old, have had one lawsuit each at most.

When the Huntington Beach adventure playground began in the 1970s (near Los Angeles), the staff persuaded the insurance company to monitor its safety record. After three summers, the insurance company determined that the adventure play safety record was so close to that of traditional playgrounds that no additional premiums

would be needed. The same is true at other adventure playgrounds.

In 2001 the highly respected National Children's Bureau in the UK was asked to examine evidence of accidents, risk, and risk management at adventure playgrounds in three of London's boroughs. They examined data from more than a dozen adventure playgrounds and concluded that accidents, particularly serious accidents, were rare at the adventure playgrounds.

Similar results were found in Ottawa in the 1970s when adventure playgrounds existed there. While strict comparisons were not possible because of a lack of systematic record-keeping, the qualitative accounts from adventure playgrounds indicated that the accidents were low in frequency and severity. The researchers commented that children seemed to be more careful when they knew they were handling tools that were potentially dangerous.

While serious accidents are rare when children are given opportunities for adventurous play, smaller injuries do happen. Bumps and bruises and even an occasional broken bone have always been accepted as part of an active childhood. As the excellent British publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision* states, "In a playground, bumps, bruises, scrapes and even a broken limb are not necessarily warning signs of greater dangers, as they might be in a factory or an office environment. They are to be expected as part of everyday life for children growing up." (p. 29)

Nonetheless, most playgrounds are designed today to pose as little risk to children as possible. Adventure playgrounds turn that adage on its head and offer children as much risk as they can handle. How much risk children can handle varies by age and skill. In a Waldorf setting it's a great help that children are good with their hands and have developed their coordination through games and play. Chances are they handle risk very well.

If a child is injured on a frequent basis, it is well worth asking why. Perhaps there is a problem with balance or other senses that can be improved through remedial exercises. Or perhaps there's an underlying issue, such as a need to prove something to others that overrides the child's good sense. Occasionally one sees a natural daredevil who relishes the thrill of the risk and does not mind a broken bone. Evel Knievel, for instance, is listed in the Guinness book of world records as having the most bone fractures of any human being —433. Imagine having had him in your class as a child or teen! On a more serious note, children sometimes seek injury for complex, psychological reasons. Knowing this is a first step toward providing help.

> Adventure playgrounds turn the "as little risk as possible" adage on its head.

Encouraging All Forms of Play

There are many types of play, and a good player engages in all of them, often in a single play session. A rich play environment is designed to support all forms of play. Some key play types are *make-believe play*, *large motor play*, and *fine motor play*. Most playgrounds include equipment and space for running, climbing, swinging, and sliding, all of which exercise large motor skills. Ideally the play space should also offer sand and water, earth and mud for fine motor shaping and modeling. Play materials that children can use for building or dressing up encourage make-believe play. These can be stumps and branches for building forts and dens, fabric for dress-ups and houses, and much more.

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There are other types of play that regularly appear on a playground. These include *mastery play,* in which children repeat an action again and again until they have mastered it. Jump roping is one example, as is challenging oneself to leap from ever higher places. *Rules-based play* is most common in the elementary grades, in which children make up rules for their games and change them as needed. Or they play traditional games, learning their rules and then adapting them to meet the circumstances.

In *symbolic play* children change objects into whatever is needed for their play. A stick can become a fishing pole, a crutch, part of a house, or much more. All sorts of play objects lend themselves to symbolic play. They can be natural materials as well as objects cast off by adults, such as cardboard boxes. Children know they won't get into trouble for harming such objects, and they feel free to explore their use with great imagination.

In *arts-filled play* children use chalk for sidewalk art, paint with water on outdoor surfaces or with colors if available. They create instruments and make music, do puppet shows, act out stories, and invent dance routines.

The most troublesome forms of play from an adult perspective are *rough and tumble play* and *risk-taking, deep play* (which is discussed elsewhere in this article). These types tend to awaken uncertainty in adults about appropriate boundaries. Rough and tumble play is the type of physical play found in the animal kingdom as well as among human beings. It is different from aggressive play, which aims to dominate and even do physical harm. Rough and tumble play is a form of cooperative play that can be seen in puppies tumbling over one another. For teens and older children it can take the form of complex wrestling moves that they choreograph for themselves and act out on mats or soft ground. For younger children it is just good-natured roughhousing. One can usually tell if it's slipping into aggressive play, for the children's gestures become less rounded and more pointed. A hardening comes into the body, and the eyes and face look more focused and aggressive. That's a good moment to watch and see if the children can pull back into rough and tumble play or if they need help to keep from hurting each other.

Adventuresome Play in a School Setting

There are many ways to enhance children's play opportunities at school, especially on the playground. Some require building new equipment, but others require very little expense. Here are some examples that have worked well in playgrounds I've visited.

Loose parts: A first step to improving a play space is to bring in movable, loose parts. These are simple objects from the natural world or cast-offs from the adult world that children can use in their play. Stumps, branches, tree slices, stones, fabric, and other natural materials are frequently found on Waldorf playgrounds. But if a school can bear the mess, boxes, tubes from rugs, and other such artifacts also make great play materials. One of my favorite examples took place at a play day in Central Park. The children played with large boxes, cloths, rope, and tape, plus a few odd things like an old venetian blind. This was frequently integrated into the cardboard houses, but one boy slipped it over his head and it became his armor. He was so proud.

A growing number of public schools in England are providing loose parts at recess and storing them in playpods. There is a delightful film on YouTube showing the use of such a container. Just Google "Scrapstore PlayPods" for examples.

On a recent trip to the UK, a fellow play-enthusiast and I visited a number of adventure playgrounds and met with leading play advocates. A frequent question we asked was what makes a playground an "adventure playground." Some that we visited looked like the original junk playgrounds. Others looked very neat with large structures designed and built for that setting. The best answer we heard was that an adventure playground

allows children to move things around. It looks different every day. Children may build with hammers and nails or hang ropes and drape cloths, but they "own" the play space in ways that are not possible if there is only fixed equipment.

Swings: Most playgrounds have traditional swings or horizontal tires, but there are other options that children love. Many adventure playgrounds build swing structures that are circular in form with six or eight sides. A swing hangs from each overhead beam so that when the children swing they look inward and swing toward each other. Facing each other adds much enjoyment and makes one wonder why swings are not all built in this way.

In addition to horizontal tire swings, which can be a car tire for one or two children or a tractor tire for many, there are also horizontal circle swings with netting in the center. One or more children can sit or lie down on the swing. It serves a purpose similar to a hammock in which children love to swing wildly or curl up with their friends for peaceful conversations.

A swing-like piece of equipment installed at Victoria Playground, a lovely destination playground in London, is comprised of a log suspended horizontally by chains from an overhead beam. One or more children can stand on the log, holding onto the chains and propelling the log forward and back.

One of my favorite swings as a child was a large boat swing that was moved back and forth by pulling on stout ropes. The larger the boat, the more strength it took to move it. Children love using their full strength in play, and any activity that gets them pulling together is a plus.

Balance beams: A traditional balance beam is mounted a short distance above the ground. That's fine for young children, but older children need more of a challenge. Some playgrounds have thick wire for balancing on, as in a circus. It may be a foot or two above the ground, but on either side are railings that children can hold onto as they develop their balance. These can be made of rope or other materials. An ingenious example made of knotted plastic bags can be seen on the TED talk given by Gever Tulley, founder of the Tinkering School. It's hard to imagine how many plastic bags were needed.

At London's Victoria Park can be found a series of long planks overlapped at various angles. The result is something between a balance beam and a seesaw. The planks move gently up and down as one walks on them. Teens also love sitting on them and experiencing a rocking movement as they chat.

Slides: Sliding boards are being given new life in adventuresome ways. The City Museum in St. Louis has a remarkable collection of slides that go down two or three stories in the old shoe factory that houses this play space. The newest and most remarkable one extends from the roof on the 11th floor to the first floor, with many twists and turns. It's not well-suited for a school, but children adore it.

It's becoming more common to see very tall slides on playgrounds. They usually are set into a hillside that may be natural or constructed of earth and rocks hauled in for the purpose. A wonderful slide can be found at Teardrop Park in Battery Park City in lower Manhattan by the Hudson River. Although there are stone steps going up the hillside to the top of the slide, nearly all the children prefer to scramble up the large rocks.

At the *Holzwurm* Playground near Zurich, a tower-like play structure was built, perhaps three stories high, with a slide running down one side. And three tall slides descend on a tall hillside at Victoria Park.

Climbing structures: Some of my favorite climbing equipment looks like the crown of a tree with many thick branches jutting out from the ground at various angles. Children can climb quite high on the branches or stay low to the ground. They can also build houses and forts on the ground under the branches. One also sees combinations of branches, telephone poles, and beams fastened together in odd

shapes, sometimes enhanced by cargo nets for climbing.

Climbing walls have also become very popular and can become as high and challenging as one wants. It's also possible to have metal poles, sometimes with a bell at the top, for children to shimmy up. A few years ago I saw one at a playground and asked a fourth grader if he could climb it in order to show me how it was done. Watching him was like watching native children climb coconut palms in tropical countries. Up he went and rang the bell with no trouble at all.

Fixed Equipment: Adventure playgrounds typically have some fixed equipment. It is often unique and built for that playground, much like my experience with Waldorf early childhood playgrounds. Such playgrounds grow and develop over time. There are some good examples of adventuresome equipment on the website of Architectural Playground Equipment, distributor in North America for the German firm Richter. Some North American firms are also becoming more adventurous with their designs.

In general, the more adventurous the play, the greater its value.

Suggestions

Based on our research and visits to adventurous play spaces, a few ideas stand out for schools. One is to take children's outdoor play as seriously as other pedagogical considerations. It's a vital part of children's learning experience. As one seven-year-old said, "At recess I remember everything I learned." Play is a powerful tool for learning, but it also strengthens children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. In general, the more adventurous the play, the greater its value.

There will always be objections to adventuresome play, so it's a help to form a school committee to study the issue. Parents need to be involved in the process. One also needs to be aware of what the risk experts are saying in the reports mentioned in this article, and also to consult with the play experts—the children. Changes to a school playground, both large and small, need not be sudden. Playgrounds can grow and develop organically over time.

When it comes to adventurous spaces, it's good to watch the children and see how they meet new challenges. Generally, adult confidence grows as we watch the children.

Also, consider running adventure play camps that are advertised as such, with house-building opportunities, mud pits, water slides on wet tarps, and more. There's great interest in adventure experiences among some families and also tinkering opportunities. Both are natural outgrowths of the Waldorf approach. Such camps may also attract new families to the school, and they are likely to be just the kind of families that will love Waldorf education.

As a first step one could consider running some play days for the school community and the public. Ideas can be found at the website of pop-up adventure playgrounds.

For more ideas about play and risk and for photos and videos of many of the play ideas presented here, go to the website of the Alliance for Childhood: www.allianceforchildhood.org.

Endnotes

1. Lenore Skenazy, *Free-Range Kids: Giving Our Children the Freedom We Had without Going Nuts with Worry* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009) p.5.
2. Bob Hughes, *Play Types: Speculations and Possibilities*, (London: London Centre for Playwork Education and Training, 2006) pp.41–42.
3. The web site for the Berkeley Adventure Playground is http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/contentdisplay.aspx?id=8656.

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