

1

Leadership

Participants are seated in groups of three or four. No larger than four, unless the total group size is five. A group of two is too small.

In his or her own words, the Guide conveys a warm message of invitation:

Commonality: we share a common interest in doing what is best for children. When we do our best we are truly and deeply satisfied and so are the children and their parents.

Possibility: we desire in our togetherness a powerful transformation in (a) our effectiveness with young children and (b) happiness with ourselves, way beyond what we now experience.

Opportunity: we have this time to be together to share with each other what is on our minds, to listen to other perspectives, and to explore the same aims with our unique selves, our unique settings, and our unique children.

Commitment: I invite you to make a commitment, lasting week after week for many weeks, to do the work on time and come here prepared to share yourself openly.

The essential activity is for the participants to play with open-ended materials and then co-construct the sequence and social context of play.

Outline

OPENING

A review of how the Modules work:

- *An Investigation task is assigned at each session.*
- *A Portfolio, a personal record maintained by each participant in his or her own way, is not evaluated, but doing it well may have a value in the future. It allows one (a) to understand how one learns, (b) to demonstrate the depth of attainment.*
- *A Project of Understanding demonstrates the ability to implement the central idea of each Module.*
- *An Expression of Understanding conveys the personal experience of the work.*

PLAY ACTIVITY Since this Module is about play, it is important for us all to be using the word "play" in the same way. If we begin by playing, that should help us define it. You have 15 minutes to play, freely doing what you like.

SHARING You have a few minutes to talk together about what happened when you played, describing the sequence and what you noticed.

GROUP DISCUSSION I want to achieve agreement about what happens in play.

The goal is to have three lists, like that on the next page, so the Guide places contributions in the correct group. So participants contribute to the discussion rather than take notes, the Guide types their work and hands it out in the next session.

- *The three steps in play we are looking for: (1) get active, do, start; (2) get an idea, a vision, a purpose to pursue; (3) solve the problems or modify.*
- *The positive social influences that support play. See the example.*
- *The negative influences that tend to destroy or inhibit play.*

Play begins when a player does something; players act on a beginning impulse, here and now. Because we cannot see thinking about play, we, as observers, say play starts when players act, moving beyond watching or deciding.

When the group generates items that are about the social context of play, their contributions go on either the positive or negative social lists that remain unlabeled until after the three steps of play are clear. At that point, participants address the social dimensions directly. Often groups need encouragement in order to divulge the negative side — feeling hesitant, feeling judged, feeling bad in comparison to others.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 1. Concept of Play

The participants read along as the Guide reads the bottom Assignment section.

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

1. Concept of Play

INDIVIDUAL RECORD Each participant fills out the top information portion and hands it back to the Guide.

Play materials in sufficient quantity: building materials, such as Lego, Duplo, Tinker Toys, or combinations of open-ended materials such as paper cups, tape, scissors, toothpicks and clothespins.

Blackboard, whiteboard or large paper to write on is needed in every session.

Session Guide

D2— Playing Responsively with Children

Example of **PLAY AS WE DEFINE IT** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

PLAY SEQUENCE

1. Get Active
 - Pick things up and start manipulating
 - Check and test. Do.
 - Start in from the here and now
2. Intention Emerges
 - Find something happening
 - An idea comes to mind
 - Want to try to make something
3. Problem Solving
 - Discovering how things work
 - Finding another way around
 - Modifying the plan
 - Coming to a solution

POSITIVE SOCIAL FORCES

- Talking together
- Communicating
- Socializing
- Laughing
- Closeness without tension
- Getting ideas from others
- Regarding others positively
- Making friends, getting to see others as they are

NEGATIVE FORCES — THE DARK SIDE

- Copying others
- Defending personal space
- Comparisons
- Thinking that others are better
- Being criticized or ignored
- Jealousy
- Self-doubt
- Hoarding materials

2

Leadership

When groups are large, the Guide invites people to sit with people they have not talked to as yet, in groups of 3 or 4. Later participants sit where they choose.

The ideal is to be able to listen to a portion of the discussion without influencing its course in any way. It may be possible to sit close, rotating among groups from time to time, to find out what is happening, explicitly not trying to make sure people are on topic. Teachers need time to talk and freedom to talk about what they want to talk about, including other things than play.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share about what you observed about our definition of play as it relates to the world of children and adults.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

What did you notice about play?

I want to record your observations on the board (or large paper).

The participant's questions form the basis of their inquiry, so recording them on the board is important. The Guide does not answer questions participants have about the content. The purpose of these Modules is for the group to create its own understanding. A way for the Guide to honor their work is to type it and give people a copy at the next session.

REFLECTION I want to call attention to the effect of coming with your work done and sharing openly here with others. You can now see how it is important to have done the task in order for the time to be valuable and how if one person's work is not complete it detracts from the experience of the others. We have a responsibility for others, too.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME The distinction we need in order to proceed is the difference between an initiation and a response. The difference is essential to finding our way in this Module.

2. Play Initiations

A brief (30-60 second) video segment of children playing with each other can help everyone understand what the next investigation is about. Participants can use the examples in the tape to define which actions are initiations and which are responses.

Discuss the Play Initiations assignment that asks participants to further subdivide the categories into actions and statements. (For pre-language children vocalizations are considered statements.)

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

2. Play Initiations

'Play as We Define It' construction from last time

Videotape excerpt of children playing without an adult interacting.

Session Guide

D2— Playing Responsively with Children

Example of **NOTICING PLAY** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

Children are learning life skills and people skills through play.

Personalities are developed and expressed through play.

Waddlers do solitary play.

I am surprised how consistent the process is across different kinds of play activities.

Play cannot be hurried.

When there are three play partners, the dark side can arise and play is ended.

I was more aware of how everything seemed to have these components in it.

Some adults remain playful and spontaneous in their lives.

Even planning a day can be an act of play.

Stress is a dark force for both children and adults.

QUESTIONS

I wonder what happens when you don't know how to play at all.

Can children play without interacting?

Is competition learned or innate?

Since so many aspects of adult life have this play pattern we identified, can this definition really be adequate, or is there an enjoyment component that must be added to differentiate true play from work?

Does play exist because we look for it, or is it natural?

3

Leadership

The central distinctions are:

Participants are to be able to distinguish initiations and responses that occur within a play context as opposed to outside that play context. Play has to be occurring or just starting.

Participants are to be able to distinguish their own ability to respond in a way that playfully reacts to the initiations of children as opposed to initiating actions in the hopes the children will respond.

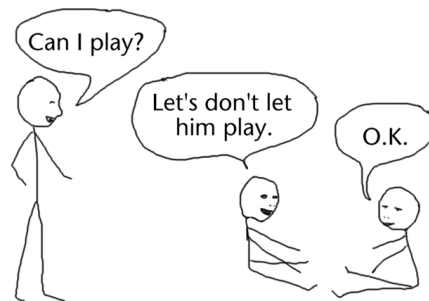
Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share about what you observed about initiations and responses.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

A stick-figure scene can help make a distinction: Two figures are sitting on the floor together. One figure is standing a little distance away.



Which of these are play initiations or play responses?

“Can I play?” is not an initiation within the play context. The figure is not doing what we have defined as Play; he is standing outside of it. “Let’s don’t let him play.” is within ongoing play and we call it an initiation. Yes, it follows the “Can I play?” statement but it is not directly responding to it. For our purposes in this play context, we are calling “Let’s don’t let him play” a play initiation. “O.K.” is a play response.

This is an appropriate time to answer questions about examples that may be in doubt. The group of participants can decide together about the context, in play or out of play, and source, whether the person was the beginner or responder. The rest of the Module depends upon people responding to children's play initiations. Without this distinction, participants may keep initiating play with children, which is exactly what we are trying to lessen.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes

3. Play Distribution

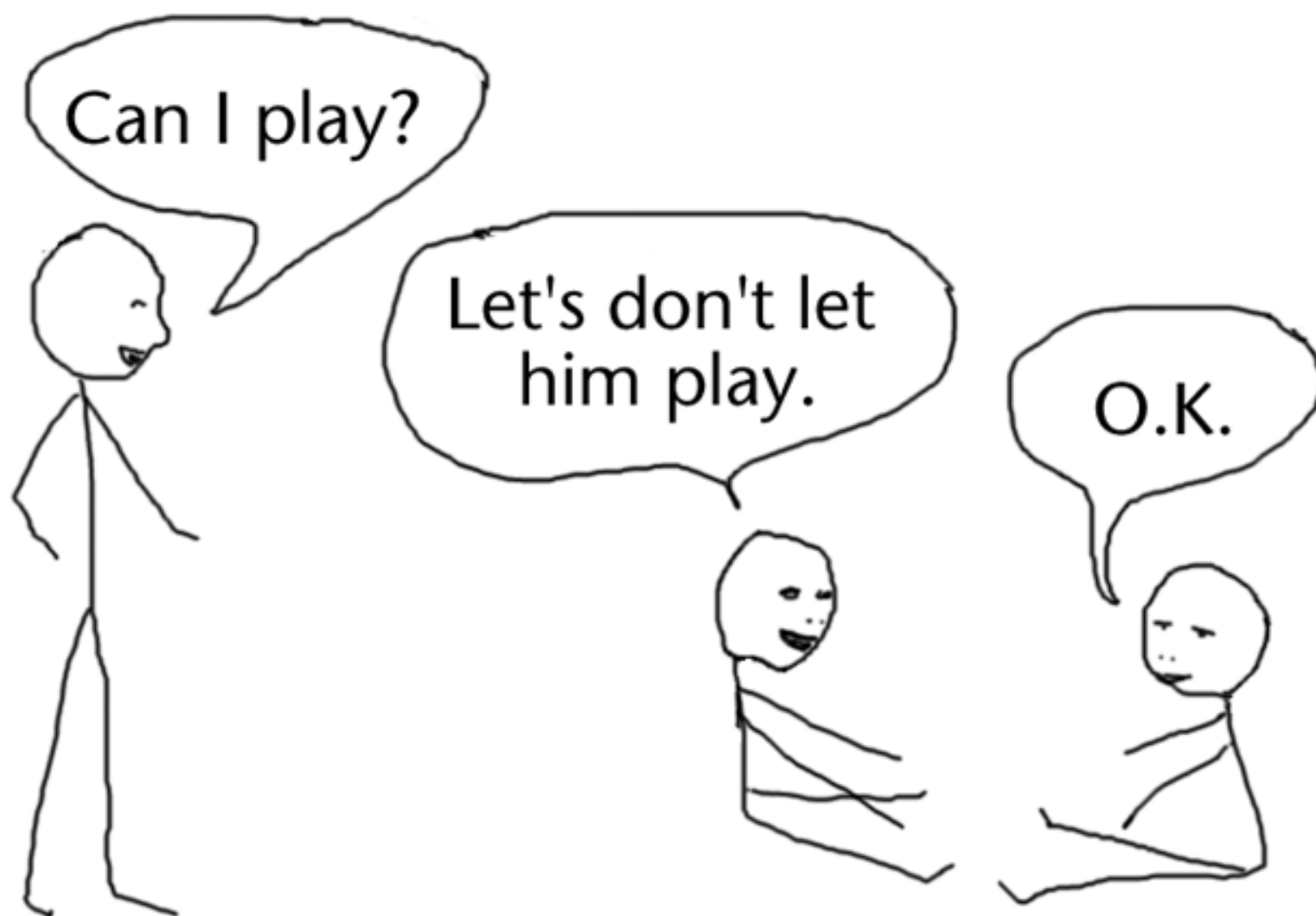
SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this

Preparation

Handouts:

3. Play Distribution

"Noticing Play"
construction from
last time



4

Leadership

The outcomes for this investigation are:

Distinguish playing responsively, that is, joining by *following*, not initiating the play. This is tricky. The natural tendency is to initiate play, for example, asking a child if he or she wants to play catch or inviting a child to join us in working on a puzzle. In responsive play, the challenge is to observe the child, see what he or she is doing and enter it. Once play is begun, then one can initiate ideas as a mutual participant.

Become aware of oneself and one's own enjoyment. *If it isn't fun for you, then you aren't playing.* Sometimes we are being friendly or nice to children, but not really having fun. We are trying to find open-ended creative play that impulsively happens, invented in the moment and cannot be repeated exactly the same again.

We are discovering those children that we do not reach naturally. Some children eagerly invite adults to play; others never do. If we try to invite these “never do's,” we would be initiating the play, which is what we are trying to avoid. This leaves us looking at a “hole.” This module focuses upon the children with unchecked boxes.

So in the discussions that take place, assist as necessary. Those that are unable to distinguish cueing from following may need specific examples.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share about what you observed about trying to play responsively with different children.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 15 minutes

What did you discover?

I want to record your observations on the board (or large paper).

This becomes another page in the portfolio.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 5 minutes

Continue **3. Play Distribution** assignment.

We are looking for three things:

1. establishing play as we define it by following — watch them and imitate to begin the interaction;
2. truly playing ourselves — make our own actions fun, spontaneous and impulsive;
3. investigating the children with the empty checkboxes — find out what is going on with certain children.

Preparation

None

Example of **DISCOVERIES ABOUT PLAY** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

Children like to play.

Some kids like adults who actively participate with them; others don't want more than an audience.

I am the one that usually initiates play.

I play with some children more than I do with others.

A certain group of 4 plays exclusively with each other.

Physical play outdoors is a good route into playing.

Children who don't play actively cause me to feel that I should initiate play more with them.

Many children didn't play with me.

It is a challenge to get children to initiate play.

Some children don't trust adults or have high anxiety.

It can be a challenge to hang in there when it drives you nuts.

I want to make myself more available.

I want to be more present.

I want to allow myself to have fun.

It's hard to remember to think like the child at that age.

QUESTIONS

Should we really be trying to establish play?

How does one deal with the constantly initiating child?

5

Leadership

Being with each group and hearing them discuss the complexity of playing responsively with many different children is the key event of this session. Often the discussions center upon a few difficult children, either because of difficult behavior or passivity.

This second discussion of play distribution may contain a story of a significant experience that makes a difference to a child. Such a story is the model for the others. However, many participants may still be confused about what is happening. It is easy to see problems with certain children as residing in the child, the child's family, or the child's past, so no solution is apparent.

The goal for this module is for each participant to experience a paradigm shift; when participants "get it," they discover another path that reaches children through genuine playful engagement. Each person has to find this for him or herself. The sharing and listening to similar stories from others opens ideas for trying new things.

The best guides: follow, have fun, and expect the way to emerge.

Outline

SHARE You have 25 minutes to share about what you observed in trying to play responsively with children who are harder to reach.

GROUP DISCUSSION 15 minutes**What did you discover this time?**

I want to call attention to what has happened. The achievement you have attained at this point is significant. Many people who work with children never achieve this understanding or, if they do, they may never state it. It remains almost a secret.

You now see an elegant and profound idea. You can use your own playful responsiveness to influence children. You can see it work unpredictably, with each unique child and in each unique moment. You have a tool, an essential tool, in teaching.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME**4. Play Project Exploration**

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

4. Play Project Exploration

'Discoveries About Play' construction from last session

Example of **MORE DISCOVERIES** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

I had a lot of fun.

When I played, the children were very likely to come back to me for more.

It is difficult to play with some children, either because of the way they played, or because they did not play at all.

Some children don't self-start play.

Children are really happy to play.

The more they invent the play, the more new play they seem to invent.

It looks like they gain confidence as leaders in play.

Keeping my mouth shut helped, so did mimicking them; imitation is a way to start.

I get funny looks from the other adults.

I made a connection. The children were more willing to listen to me.

My day improved. My day is better. I leave work happier.

Children did not do the expected rollover into aggression that usually happens.

They did not have their usual arguments. It took the "dark side" out.

I could see more of their natural character.

I found out more about the children, building a better bond that helps at other times.

6

Leadership

The effort in this session is to be with each person to hear his or her struggles with this. Some will have a clear focus and others will not. Some will have photos and written records and some will not. The hope is that the sharing by those who have a start will enable the others to find their path, too.

Outline

SHARE You have 25 minutes to share about your proposed project.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

What are you noticing about your explorations?

I want to record your observations on the board (or large paper).

This becomes another page in the portfolio.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes**5. Documentation**

The Guide reads the assignment aloud. It may be timely to assure participants that the project will emerge when they discover the path in their interactions with the child. There is no answer from anyone about how to proceed, but there is a promise that the results from the endeavor are life changing.

All one has to do is focus on what seems to be the most difficult problem and put true, fun play into it.

The most important thing right now is to take pictures of what the current situation is. It is very difficult to capture the “before” pictures, but these are the ones you most want to show after it is all finished. Like the “before” of a weight loss program or the “before” of a remodel.

Others will be interested in seeing whatever documentation you can bring here next time.

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

5. Documentation

“More Discoveries”
construction from last session

Session Guide

D2— Playing Responsively with Children

Example of **EXPLORING A PROJECT** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

It is a challenge to get some children to initiate play.

We have to break out of a mold to do it.

It is hard to keep my energy up.

I found more responsiveness from the children in general, at other times of the day, when I had to be the "teacher" again.

It lessened the scariness of a "grown-up;" they felt more comfortable if they made a mistake.

It had a Pied Piper effect, drawing in other children, leading to connectedness with others that would not have happened otherwise.

I'm not always going to be the same monster.

Trying to get those "follower" kids to use their imaginations to initiate and be a leader, too.

It is hard to keep thinking like a child.

I want to try to get back to the kids I don't get to on a regular basis.

I face the more challenging ones now. Kind of scary, but it could be unforgettable.

It may be possible to develop a connection where nothing existed before.

7

Leadership

It is not possible to tell people how to achieve child change through responsive play. The transformation lies in the participant's sharing with each other. Each can hear others talk about their child and describe their situation.

This approach to education can be difficult for everyone, including the Guide. The role of the Guide is to listen, be positive and keep the focus on what we know the participants have come to understand:

1. Play grows from the impulsive moment.
2. Play grows when people risk, on the edge, behaving in new ways.
3. The adult challenge is to stay open, flexible, and follow the child's lead.
4. It is "right" when you truly have fun.

Sometimes what the child initiates is not fully appropriate, such as throwing wood chips outside. Yet following the child's lead may then open a way to change it into appropriate play. The adult will have more fun if the play changes into something he or she is comfortable with, such as tossing chips into tubs or throwing paper balls over the climber. The new way arose, not by discouraging something, but by joining it, playing off its underlying fun.

With infants we naturally imitate what they do and make a game of it. With older children we can imitate in the same way and make a game of it. Who knows how it will develop?

One participant, who made it through this struggle, said it this way, the child's response was not verbally expressed, but it was clear: "Hey! This teacher is diggin' my style."

Outline

SHARE You have 25 minutes to share about the events of your project.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What are the problems in documenting?

What did people find that worked?

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME**6. Values**

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

6. Values

"Exploring a Project" construction from last session

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Leadership

The participants have a story to tell. A story about the children and a story about themselves. We want to enable them to get this story documented. In the process they acquire documentation skills and assess learning.

Showing past examples of excellent project documentation and a weak documentation can be helpful in developing standards of quality.

Ideally project documentation emphasizes the child, not the cleverness of the adult. One guideline for doing this is to not add color decorations. Beautiful documentation can be done on a white background, with black text printed on white paper, neatly by hand or a computer printer in a single font. Photos or drawings by the children add the color. This way the story of the child comes through; the events speak to the viewer, not fancy decorations.

The difficult distinction for people is that one follows first to get something going (possibly imitating the child), and then being simply impulsive, open, and authentically playful oneself. It profoundly changes the relationship with the child. The child discovers another way to be, also, instead of the habitual one.

The Guide's role is to try to listen to everyone. The role is to offer suggestions and alternatives that may be offered as choices, without giving advice or telling them what to do. Alternatives are like a restaurant menu, they offer a range of selections and do not advise the patron what to choose.

Outline

SHARE You have 25 minutes to share about your project.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

On a board or large sheet of paper compile the group's ideas about this question:

What guides a decision about when it is appropriate for the adult to play?

This is another addition to each participant's portfolio.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME**7. Project of Understanding**

This module is about you being consciously able to change the quality of the relationship you have with the difficult children. It explores how to rely on your sensitive, playful impulsiveness and use it intentionally for the betterment of another human being. Whatever else happens here, this Module has forced you to think about responding playfully for weeks now. You are aware. Now it is time for you to prove you can make a difference to a child.

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

7. Project of Understanding

Supplies:

One blank white sheet of poster board, 22" by 28" available for each participant.

Example of **WHEN TO PLAY GUIDELINES** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

I CAN PLAY

- When there is a child unable to join in any play by him or herself.
- When a child is sad or uncomfortable.
- When other children reject a child.
- To create a group game, to redirect, or to educate.
- To extend or involve a child just before he or she is about to 'lose it.'
- To start play until others join in, to sustain it for a while, and then fade out.

I DON'T PLAY

- When children are happily engaged already.
- When I have become the focus for the play.
- When I feel surrounded.
- When I have to stay accountable for the other children, too.
- When I don't see a point anymore.
- When it gets too wild or crazy.

9

Leadership

The role of the Guide is to ensure that participants meet the standards of performance in order to complete the Module.

Projects must meet all four criteria:

- ☐ Be shared with the group
- ☐ Have a clear objective for the child to achieve
- ☐ Show being responsive to the child's initiative, not leading
- ☐ Show observable child change

If not quite complete, offer the opportunity to add to the story in the next session.

Clap and cheer.

Outline

PRESENTATIONS OF PROJECTS**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME****8. Expression of Understanding**

It is easy to be baffled by difficult children. The outrageous ones are more noticeable as problems, but the quiet passive ones are the most difficult to influence. Play is a powerful place to establish relationships that transform these problems. Play is yours to use now that you know what it is, and you know how to get it started.

The challenge now is to show that you truly, deeply, and unforgettably understand in an Expression of Understanding and present it in a way that is uniquely you.

In the past people have:

Simply described to the group what this has meant for them personally.

Composed a song, transforming lyrics or creating a new piece.

Written and read a poem, with or without calligraphy.

Painted or drawn picture.

Created a collage.

Written a letter to someone and read it aloud.

Played a recording and danced.

Created a short dramatic piece.

Created a poster.

Drawn a cartoon.

Diversity and uniqueness are valued. You find your own way to tell your own understanding. We want to hear and see and cherish what you create.

Preparation

Handouts:

8. Expression of Understanding

'When to Play Guidelines' list constructed at the last session.

10

Leadership

This is a heart-warming celebration of becoming an early childhood educator. Clap and Cheer.

When signed and dated, with all information complete the **INDIVIDUAL RECORD FORM** becomes the certificate of completion and certifies 30 hours of education (10 in session time and 20 equivalent hours on-the-job).

Outline

PRESENTATIONS

- (1) Projects that were not ready last time.
- (2) Expressions of Understanding.

*On the **INDIVIDUAL RECORD FORM** is a space to briefly describe each person's Expression of Understanding and check off that it was shared with the group.*

SUMMARY

Congratulations on completing another step into the world of being a professional early childhood educator. You have joined the ranks of those adults who can transform relationships with children through playfulness. You have shown you can make a difference to children and to yourself. This is a significant accomplishment.

You have seen how easy it is to think of children as behavior problems, to see them in terms of hardened habits, and to look at situations that seem impossible. Now you know there is a way, unpredictable, yes, but possible. You have seen how playfulness is a positive and joyful way to open new ways for people to be.

You have done it and seen others do it, too. This is a huge, almost magical step for everyone who makes it. Congratulations.

I invite you to spend the time to compile all your work in this Module and put it in a fancy binder. You may want to show this to a future employer or parent.

Preparation