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What's the Hurry?

Emotions do not fit neatly into a tight time line or a hurried schedule.

Children need time and they need us.



The beginning of something is always important, especially when it is young and needs time to grow.

(Plato)



The pressures upon professionals

Professionals in early childhood are under increasing pressure to “deliver the goods”. To provide every opportunity for children so that before they even commence school, they are literate, numerate, well mannered and behaved, polite, socialised, creative, and “ready for school”!!!!!!!

The institutionalisation of school

We measure success of schools not by the kinds of human beings they promote but by whatever increases in reading scores they chalk up. We have allowed quantitative standards, so central to the economic system, to become the principal yardstick for our definition of children's worth.” (Elkind 2001)

“The factory model of education hurries children because it ignores individual differences in mental abilities and learning rates and learning styles. Children are pressured to meet uniform standards as measured by standardized tests.

(Elkind 2001)

“Unhappily, the over testing of children has become more extensive than ever. Media pressures to turn children into consumers has also grown exponentially”. Elkind 2001

Victorian Example:

The new report card which labels children in grade levels, A, B, C, D, E

The standardised testing in years 3 and 5

“Parents are under more pressure than ever to over schedule their children and have them engage in organized sports and other activities that may be age inappropriate” ..

Our society today

*Where has childhood
gone?*

Where has childhood gone?

- Children dressed as teenagers
- Children being overscheduled
- Expectations of children to be “perfectly behaved”
- Expectations of children to be literate and numerate at age 3 or 4 years
- Over labeling of some children

Quick fixes



Possible reasons for the rushed and hurried world

- An economic rationalist perspective that measures quality based on “throughput”. A data driven mentality.
- Significant shift in technology that has quickened the world. Immediate gratification, answers and responses.
- Global influences upon accountability.

How language has changed

- From:
 - Aims
 - Objectives
 - Goals
- To
 - Outcomes
 - Standards
 - Benchmarks

What we want for our children

- Parents response:
- To be
 - Healthy
 - Happy
 - Successful

What is success?

Helping parents to re define success

- Positive self esteem
- Ability to communicate effectively and articulate needs and views
- Ability to form relationships
- Respectful interactions and acceptance of diversity
- To think creatively and laterally
- To be literate and numerate

To be literate and numerate

Not just reading and writing

- To make sense of things
- To relate literacy and numeracy to everyday life
- To be motivated to find things out and understand
- To research, to investigate, to explore,
- To read and write

A focus on Self Concept

- **Self esteem**

How we believe ourselves to be most of the time. A sense that we are okay people, we are lovable, respected and worthwhile. A realistic view of who we are.

- **Self competence**

Knowledge of what our strengths are, what we can do, what we need to work toward

A focus on Resilience

A child's personal capacity not only to manage stress but to come out of a difficult situation positively. To come out 'on top'. To bounce back.

Where does that place the professional?

- **Challenges:**
- Working within a complex world with conflicting messages and huge expectations
- Competing and confused messages from colleagues: Eg. School readiness, role of early childhood programs
- Accountability
- Over regulation

Reclaim childhood!!!

- For some children and families, the early childhood program may be the only place where play, where time and childhood itself is valued
- Hold firmly to the play based curriculum
- Never compromise or bow to pressures that are in opposition to childhood

Reflecting and respecting the emotions

- Development of Identity (I belong)
- Self Concept (I'm an okay person)
- Self competence (I can handle things okay most of the time)
- Resilience (I can try again)
- Emotional development (I need to feel safe)
- Psychological development (I can trust life)

The notion of “containment”

- The adult needs to be capable of “holding” what the child produces, whether it be crying, biting, hitting, anxiety, anger, discomfort. The adult needs to be able to transform these communications of the child.
- Holding is the emotional holding of an experience rather than blaming

- Appropriate expectations (brain and child development)
- Modeling
- Reflecting feelings (acknowledgment)
- Attaching
- Relationship building
- Reflection and change

The early childhood professional

- Look after yourself
- Avoid the hurry
- Be proud of your role and what you offer children

What can parents do?

- Limit TV
- Provide lots of down time and play time at home or the park
- Avoid over scheduling
- Have meal times together
- Regular bed and sleep routines
- Predictable and reliable and trusting home life

Texts

- What's the hurry? Reclaiming childhood in an overscheduled world. By Kathy Walker
- Kathy's Website:
www.kathywalkeredcon.com.au
- The Hurried child by David Elkind