ForeWord Reviews
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FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Play Works: Helping Children Learn Through Play
Susanne T. Eden
978-1-4343-6519-4
Four Stars (out of Five)

Susanne T. Eden devotes her life to child s play. She writes “Play influences all aspects of development. Without play the development of the mind body and spirit is stunted.” Eden makes a convincing case that “play works as the foremost means of development and learning in the early years.”

The author s authority rings from every page. Using a familiar and effective format heavy on fact-based presentations and lightly sprinkled with anecdotes and quotes from respected experts she presents a thoroughly researched book that supports her premise. Eden includes a select few black and white photos as well as useful tables and graphs. Each chapter begins with a quote from a noted expert and proceeds with clear succinct and reasonable explanations of topics such as “Play Develops a Positive Sense of Self.” A “What Can We Do to Help?” section closes each chapter giving specific directions for readers to utilize play with their children and students.

The book broken down into four parts begins with a definition of play as “both a social activity and a psychological process.” She provides insight into children at play and what they learn because of it. Part two “Making It Happen” explores the playscape outdoor play adult supporting roles discipline through play and aggressive play. Part three “Learning Naturally” delves into basics which include reading together through play how math science technology and play integrate awakening the artist and returning play to the children. Part four provides references including an impressive reading list and bibliography.

Perhaps her strongest argument against a regimented curriculum that is long on lessons and short on play or exploration rests in this statement: “Recognize that the marketplace of tomorrow will be very different from what we ve known….As parents and teachers we need to nurture the skills basic to the changing world—flexibility adaptability creativity and communication. We need to build confidence initiative curiosity and risk-taking in our children so that they will thrive in the world of tomorrow.”

Eden who holds a Doctor of Education degree spent decades working with children and

educators and serving in professional organizations. She taught specialist courses in primary and junior education and designed and taught curriculum courses in play language and learning for York University. Now that she s retired Eden continues to write and serve as a consultant to several national organizations devoted to children. The author speaks with reasoned rational discourse not an emotional outcry. Although the alternative form of early education gets little discussion this is not a heavy-handed or unbalanced presentation of facts. The book offers valuable information that every parent and educator should read.

Dawn Goldsmith