

Education

Kindergarten: 'It's not Kansas anymore'

Jim Uphoff Ed. D.



rience. They learn through play."

Both writers cite the ever-increasing emphasis on "sit-still, paper-pencil testing" as pushed most recently by the No Child Left Behind law since 2002 as a major factor. Both decry what is increasingly becoming common as even very young children are being labeled as failures when, in reality, it is the actions of adults. These adults, many are politicians, either do not know "diddly-squat" about how children grow and learn best, or even worse, they ignore these facts in favor of a political ideology.

"Recess has been truncated or has disappeared entirely in some schools, a double whammy, since children are stressed out by the new demands and also deprived of their major stress reliever," wrote Hartigan. Ms. Stewart wrote, "The best teachers strive for a healthy balance of child-initiated play and teacher-guided, hands-on learning."

Our own Ohio Governor has made a strong recommendation for ALL schools to have ALL-DAY kindergartens and the newest Ohio budget bill requires this for the future. That many low-income, minority, and limited-English children need this addi-

tional time and DO profit from it is well documented. This would help reduce the achievement gaps that now exist. HOWEVER, the new state budget contains NO dollars to pay for the new classrooms and new teachers that this requirement would require.

For example our Oakwood schools might need to find at least four more classrooms and hire at least three more teachers. Since the state is supporting Oakwood with many fewer dollars this year than last, these new costs of hundreds of thousands of new dollars would have to come from our local taxpayers. I fully support quality ALL-DAY K because it allows teachers more time to achieve both the balance described above AND to teach the basic curriculum in appropriate ways.

BUT I do NOT support such unfunded mandates that force local schools to find new dollars or to reduce other parts of the school program just in order to meet the new mandate from on high! Kindergarten needs to be an appropriate place for young children to learn best, but not the politicians' political tool without adequate funding as a foundation. What do you think?

The 8-30-09 *Boston Globe* headline and lead read, "Pressure-cooker kindergarten: A new emphasis on testing and test-preparation--brought on by politicians, not early education experts--is hurting the youngest students." An 8-24-09 *Salt Lake Tribune* headline said, "Kindergarten crunch: Lack of playtime killing joy of learning, say advocates."

Both articles written by reporters in two very different parts of our nation highlight a very real concern about a testing-mania ignoring massive research data about how young children learn best. "In many kindergarten classrooms there is no playtime. And standardized tests are now routine," wrote Kristen Stewart in Utah. Patti Hartigan in Boston wrote, "Five-year olds don't learn by listening to a rote lesson, their bottoms on their chairs. They learn through expe-



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MOMs Group coffee Sept. 17

The MOMs Group of Oakwood will hold its annual new member coffee on Thursday morning, Sept. 17 at 9:30 a.m. The coffee is open to all new and prospective members of the group and will be held at the home of Lauren Hemm, 147 Lookout Dr. Children are welcome to attend. MOMs Group activities throughout the year include monthly meetings hosting pertinent speakers, a weekly themed playgroup, field trips, MOMs Night Out, a book club and even a cooking club! For more information or to RSVP for the coffee, please contact Myra Mardis at mfmardis@yahoo.com or 937-648-7049.

What's Up This Week!

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