

Pedagogy and Practice

OUR WORK AT BOWDOIN COLLEGE CHILDREN'S CENTER

Attachment

Attachment is defined at the Center as a safe, secure and predictable bond that forms between a child and their primary caregiver through caregiving routines.

- f* When a child is secure and sure of their care and that their needs will be understood and met, they can freely play and learn. In order to build these secure and sure relationships, we practice primary caregiving so that each child has a meaningful and trusting relationship with their caregiver.
- f* Through the care responsibilities such as feeding, napping, changing and dressing the child, the caregiver builds this primary bond with the child and then the family.
- f* Additionally, part-time staff consistently work in a specific program at the Center so that there are fewer adults the very young child needs to know and trust.

Primary caregiving and Proximity

The primary caregiver steps into the role as the child's main focus through the day. Initially, a child who is new to the group is cared for primarily by this person so that they build a connection through repeated routine care interactions. Over time, the connection develops into an understanding and then trust. Once this connection blossoms into a deeper relationship, children may receive care from other caregivers in their cohort.

After developing strong and solid relationships with the children, we maintain proximity to them, so that they feel our presence and play freely and independently. Being present might mean doing chores, working in the garden, shoveling, or knitting so that attention isn't focused on the playing child but rather on the task at hand while we are visible to them.

Primary caregivers have deep long-term relationships with the child's parents. They meet throughout the year, check-in daily, and guide them through their child's development as needed. Conferences and portfolios are managed by the primary.

Background
understanding
of the
importance of
play

Loose Parts

Nicholson (1971) coined the term loose parts theory to articulate the idea that children benefit from being given open-ended materials. This means that the materials may be used alone or with other materials. They are movable and do not have a defined use; rather children may use them in a variety of ways.

Loose parts do not have specific instructions of how the product needs to be used. Through exploration and manipulation of the materials, children figure out how they can be combined, redesigned, taken apart and put together in multiple ways.

When materials do not have a specific purpose, children feel invited to be curious about the items in their environment and then *mess about* with them.

Quality Environments

The inside rooms at the Children's Center are places for experiencing learning, developing curiosity and exploring autonomy. Caregivers don't impart knowledge but offer conditions for learning by preparing sufficient space and time for the child.

The attention and generosity shown by adults towards children are also manifested in the creation of environments which favor their cognitive growth.

These environments sustain and stimulate the child's imagination as they are arranged for children's eyes, hands and gestures. They offer the child proximity through sight and space to their caregivers in order to reduce tension.

These environments are predictable, understandable, and meaningful enough to stimulate the children towards organizing their own games, activities, and discoveries. All the areas are conceived of and designed for everyone to enjoy.

Uninterrupted play

At the Children's Center, we keep a quiet and calm backdrop for the children's play to avoid drawing their attention away from their activity and to support and acknowledge the fragility of the young child's developing abilities.

A few research studies suggest that brief interruptions when children are playing can end their ongoing activities. With 3-year-olds, they were unable to return to their play after interruptions without adult prompts. If the play resumed, it was less intense. Children younger than 3 years, who are finding play, are very susceptible to interruptions because of poorly developed control over their sustained attention.

Interruptions are kept at a minimum when young children receive care that is predictable, when form and structure are in balance; and when sensory stimulation is within the child's capacity to manage it.

