

Explorations Early Learning 2025 Training Topics

New In 2025

Encouraging Uninterrupted Play And Exploration



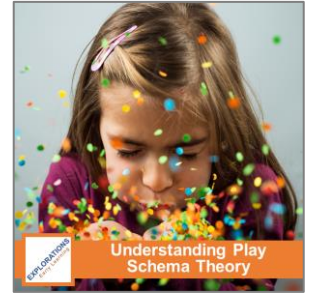
Description

This training explores the impact of interruptions on children’s play and exploration and the importance of providing uninterrupted playtime. Participants will learn why adults interrupt play, why interruptions are harmful, and strategies to minimize interruptions and foster an environment that supports children’s self-directed play and exploration.

Understanding Play Schema Theory

Description

Have you ever met a child who repeatedly dumped containers of toys, threw everything they could get their hands on, or loved hanging upside down? These repeated patterns of behavior are examples of play schemas. Understanding these schemas provides insight into why kids do such things. This self-paced, on-demand training investigates 11 common play schemas and ways to support them in an early learning setting. It also looks at why a deeper understanding of schemas can improve interactions with children—and learning.



Understanding Heavy Work

Description

Heavy work refers to activities that push or pull against the body or involve carrying. Such activities support physical, social, and emotional development. Sadly, 21st-century kids engage in much less heavy work than previous generations. This training looks at heavy work's role in learning and development, shares many examples of heavy work, and explores ways to provide kids with more opportunities to engage in heavy work.



Playing With Measuring

Description

From beakers to yardsticks, supporting play with measuring tools is a great way to help children bump into opportunities for STEM learning—and lots of other learning. This training looks at the value of measuring play, recommended measuring tools, and ideas for supporting child-led measurement play.



Play And The 8 Sensory Systems

Description

From squishing sticky sensory play concoctions to spinning on the swings, play helps children wire and connect their brains and nervous systems. This session examines how that process works, looks at the body's 8 sensory systems, and offers ideas for supporting play that nourishes those systems.



Building Early Math Skills With Play

Description

This training offers ideas for supporting the development of 11 early math skills through child-directed play. We'll define each of the 11 skills, look at how children develop them while playing, and share ideas for building math-friendly play environments.



Reimagining Your Dramatic Play Space

Description

Dramatic play is often confined to a classroom corner with a table, a kitchen set, plastic food, and a few baby dolls. Such setups are fine, but dramatic play can be so much more. This session highlights ways to reimagine and support vibrant dramatic play spaces. We'll dig into ways to create reinvigorated, child-led, creative dramatic play spaces full of loose parts, imagination, and learning.



Managing Mud Play

Description

Slimy, sticky, dirty, goeey mud play is so messy...and so fun and learning-rich. This session looks at why adults shouldn't shy away from offering it up as a regular part of the curriculum. We focus on the magnificence of mud play—setting it up, supporting it, and understanding all the learning it offers.



Supporting Ramp Play

Description

Supporting Ramp Play is ramps from beginning to end! We'll look at DIY ramps and ramp supports, the difference between ramp play and ramp lessons, what kids learn while playing with ramps, creating a supportive ramp play environment, and more. The session offers a balance of practical ideas and theories to help you offer children a richer ramp play experience.



Using Tools With Kids

Description

Using tools makes kids feel strong, capable, confident, and powerful. This session looks at setting up learning-rich and safe tool-use experiences for young children. We also offer tips to help adults who feel intimidated by tools get more comfortable with them, so they can better support tool-wielding kids.



Establishing A Tinkering Space

Description

This session looks at setting up a creative space for kids to tinker, create, muck about, and build with loose parts. Whether they're building spaceships, zombie traps, or the world's tallest cardboard box tower, such play offers a learning-rich creative outlet.



Setting Up A Process-Focused Craft Center

Description

This session looks at establishing a space for child-led, process-focused creation and creativity. We'll look at what to include in your creative area, set up suggestions, managing the mess, keeping everyone safe, and more. We'll also dig into why process-focused creation spaces like this are more child-friendly and learning-rich than product-focused alternatives.



Simple Machines In The Preschool Classroom

Description

This session looks at supporting play and STEM learning with the six classic simple machines (ramps, wedges, levers, screws, pulleys, and the wheel and axle). We'll provide an overview of these machines, offer ideas for supporting play with them in your preschool classroom, and discuss why kids should have hands-on, self-directed experiences.



Building Brains With Hands-On Play

Description

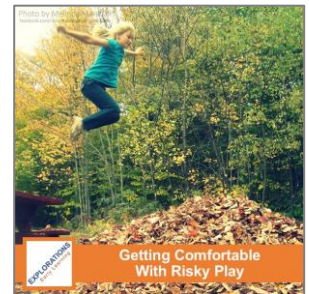
Young children learn best through hands-on, up-close-and-personal, full-contact interactions with the world. The problem many caregivers have with such learning is that kids who fully engage the world often make a mess of things—a million blocks dumped on the floor, green paint on the floor, and muddy footprints on the carpet. Based on ideas from our book, *Let Them Play*, this session looks at why this type of play is integral to early learning, ideas for managing the mess, and tips to help caregivers support hands-on play.



Getting Comfortable With Risky Play

Description

While research is clear on the value of children taking reasonable risks as they play and explore the world, many adults need to be more comfortable with such play and exploration. This session offers adults a chance to gain a deeper understanding of risky play's value, reflect on their feelings about such play, and see how risk-taking supports learning.



Defining Play

Description

While play researchers and theorists have established a clear and agreed-upon definition of play and its importance in the lives of young children, confusion remains about what is and is not play. This session examines the purpose of play and the difference between real play and play-like activity.



Building Better Block Play

Description

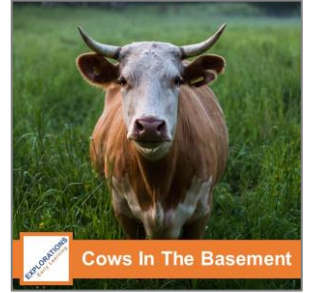
This session looks at re-energizing your block play area with playful props, thoughtful policies, and appropriate support. We will also dig into the comprehensive and deep learning opportunities block play promotes.



Cows In The Basement

Description

The early years should be full of whimsical fantasy play, yet in many classrooms, time for such play is limited as more and more time is devoted to teacher-led activities. This session looks at why children should have plenty of time for self-directed fantasy and imaginative play, creative storytelling, and make-believe and offers tips for supporting such play.



Zombie Vampire Veterinarian Moms

Description

Weapons, rough-and-tumble, superhero, death, and similar types of play often get a bad rap in early learning settings. Attempts are made to restrict and outright ban these types of play because they are loud, rowdy, aggressive, violent-looking, and can make adults uncomfortable. The problem is such play is ripe with learning possibilities and developmental benefits. Based on ideas from our book, *Let Them Play*, this session looks at the positive side of the play that makes adults uncomfortable and offers suggestions for embracing and supporting it instead of trying to ban it.



Trusting Kids As Learners

Description

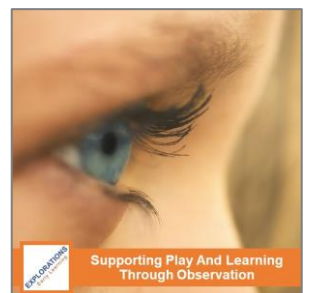
Children are wired for learning—they are good at it, eager to do it, and driven to it. Yet, too often, they are not supported in leading their learning. Based on ideas from our book, *Let Them Play*, this session is about trusting kids as learners and creating environments where they are empowered and supported in leading their learning.



Supporting Play And Learning Through Observation

Description

This session looks at supporting children’s play by becoming a more tuned-in and systematic observer. We’ll discuss why stepping back and watching children at play is important. We’ll also look at how (and when) to use a collection of free observation tools we’ve made available on the Playvolution HQ website.



Understanding Loose Parts Play

Description

This session starts with a look at Simon Nicholson’s definition of loose parts and how the term covers so much more than pine cones and shells. After defining loose parts, we dig into things like sourcing loose parts, supporting loose parts play, the learning that happens during loose parts play, and how to explain loose parts to parents and others who may not grasp their value.



The Seven Stages Of Block Play

Description

Nearly 100 years ago, a pioneering early learning caregiver and researcher observed 7 distinct stages of play children progress through as they engage with blocks. This session looks at that researcher, the stages she observed, and what you can do to better support children and the move through each stage.



Do It Yourself STEM Play

Description

In this session, you’ll learn how to support STEM learning with simple do-it-yourself toys and materials. You’ll also develop a deeper understanding of how children learn about Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and more through hands-on play and exploration.



Do It Yourself Block Ideas

Description

This session offers many ideas for inexpensive do-it-yourself blocks made from simple, affordable, and readily available materials. We also discuss the value of child involvement in making blocks and how DIY blocks spice up traditional block play spaces.



Do It Yourself Early Literacy

Description

This session discusses simple and practical ideas for helping children build early literacy skills. We'll look at a bunch of ideas for making books, discuss how active physical play helps prepare kids to read and write, look at play-based ways to help grow vocabularies, and touch on other ideas for supporting literacy skill-building in your play environment.



Do It Yourself Early Learning

Description

Based on our books, Do It Yourself Early Learning and Everyday Early Learning, the session takes a hands-on look at dozens of ideas for using materials from your local home center, grocery store, big box store, dollar store, or recycling bin to promote child-directed play, exploration, discovery, and learning.



Time For Yourself

Description

If you're like most parents and caregivers, you spend lots of time focused on the needs of others and tend to neglect your own needs. How long can you go on like this? Who is going to meet your needs if you don't? In this session, we dig into the importance of investing in self-care.



Feeding The Good Dog

Description

In this session, based on content from our books, Finding Your Smile Again and Keeping Your Smile, we'll dig into the importance of our mindset when creating environments for young children and managing stress and burnout.



Making Mindful Change

Description

Making lasting change—in your work with children or home life—is a challenging task. If it was, we would all eat healthier, exercise more, and successfully implement new ideas in our early learning programs. We're creatures of habit—and changing those habits can be scary and uncomfortable. Whether it's self-care or classroom practice, this session looks at practical strategies for becoming more successful at making lasting change.



Attack Of The Snoterpillars

Description

Strong relationships with the children are a cornerstone of any quality early learning environment. Creating and maintaining such relationships is hard work when times are good—and downright difficult when you're stressed, exhausted, tired, or being attacked by snoterpillars. Based on ideas from my book, *Babies In The Rain*, this session looks at creating robust emotional environments, maintaining a healthy mindset, and the significance of child-caregiver relationships in building age-appropriate early learning environments.



Babies In The Rain

Description

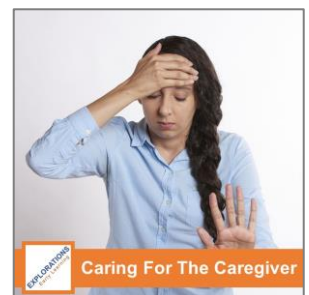
Like it or not, since everything infants and toddlers encounter is new, exciting, and a chance to learn, caregivers are Professional Role Models. Based on the book, *Babies In The Rain*, this session looks at the importance of the emotional environments caregivers create with young children. It also looks at the significance of Here and Now caregiving and meeting children where they are developmentally.



Caring For The Caregiver

Description

Working with children can be physically and emotionally exhausting, and many caregivers spend so much time focused on the kids' needs that they fail to take care of themselves. This often leads to stress and burnout as caregivers struggle to find time in their busy lives for self-care. The result? Stressed, anxious, drained, frustrated, and burnt out early learning professionals. Based on the books, *Finding Your Smile Again* and *Keeping Your Smile*.



Supporting ‘Bad’ Behavior

Description

Activities like running, climbing, throwing, spilling, punching, pinching, kicking, biting, tattling, and yelling are often labeled as bad behavior. Many early learning settings attempt to limit them—if not outright ban them. This session takes a contrarian view, looking at these activities as learning opportunities, and offers ideas for encouraging and supporting them. These things can be done safely—without hurting others—and don’t have to create friction between children and their caregivers.



Conducting Benefit-Risk Assessments

Description

This training equips early learning professionals with the knowledge and skills to conduct comprehensive benefit-risk assessments so they can more effectively support developmentally appropriate risk-taking while ensuring children’s health and safety.



Crafting Vision, Mission, And Philosophy Statements

Description

This training helps early learning professionals develop clear and impactful Vision, Mission, and Philosophy statements. Participants will learn the key characteristics of each type of statement and strategies for creating concise statements that reflect their program’s identity and values.



Creating Playful Policies And Procedures

Description

Organizations without well-defined policies and procedures for children’s play face problems maintaining consistency and continuity due to a lack of clarity among administrators, staff, and families. This training offers suggestions, resources, and guidance for creating those policies and procedures.



Defending Play

Description

Many areas of early learning world have not fully embraced the concept of true child-led play, which is a crucial way for young children to learn. This training is designed to provide valuable tips and strategies for those interested in defending and advocating for play.



Maintaining Healthy Policies And Procedures

Description

Healthy policies and procedures keep early learning programs running smoothly by assuring administrators, staff, and parents are all on the same page. This session examines the characteristics of healthy policies and procedures and offers tips for keeping them in good working order.



Program Consistency From Vision To Practice

Description

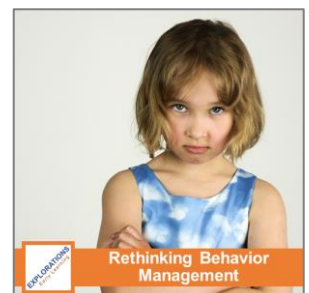
Many early learning settings struggle with programming inconsistencies. For example, the program depicted in marketing materials may not reflect actual day-to-day practice, or approaches used in one classroom may not align with those used in the adjoining room. This training equips attendees with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure program consistency, resulting in a more effective and supportive environment for the growth and development of young children.



Rethinking Behavior Management

Description

Caregivers often see behavior management as separate from curriculum. For example, some teachers feel that dealing with children's behaviors distracts from their teaching. This training looks at integrating behavior management into the curriculum to improve social and emotional learning.



Notes

- Find detailed information about all these trainings at explorationsearlylearning.com/training-topics/.
- All sessions are available in 60-minute and 90-minute formats. Some can be done in longer forms.
- Pricing for a live online presentation via ZOOM is \$600 per hour.
- Pricing for an in-person event is \$5000 for up to 6 hours of presentation time--all expenses included.
- Browse a detailed training FAQ page here: explorationsearlylearning.com/training-faqs/
- Contact me with questions at explorationsearlylearning.com/contact/
- You'll find more about me, including my bio, resume, and publication list, at this link: explorationsearlylearning.com/about-jeff-a-johnson/