

The Importance of Community Education
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In co-operation with schools and parents, communities have a responsibility to ensure the successful and thorough education of all children. While teachers and family need to provide a solid base, the practical learning occurring in the broader community is a major developmental factor for all children. There is much wisdom to be gained outside of the school and family spheres, especially for young and enthusiastic children.

It is the responsibility of the community to protect children in their early stages. The community as a whole must come together to shelter and support innocent and defenseless youth. An essential factor in this is to develop a comprehension of danger and to empower children with safety or prevention strategies. Interactive traveling safety programs generally elicit energetic responses from children; the exciting disruption of their normal routine creates a responsive attitude perfect to enumerate the dangers of playing with matches.

In addition to typical filial relationships, young children need to interact with others outside of their standard age groups. Successful relationships with friends and adults are necessary in order to contribute to an awareness of the world outside a child's typical haunts: even at an early age, an understanding of a larger community – and the differences that any environment presents – should be developed. Members of the community obviously need to be involved in this; positive role models such as a child's dance teacher or even the lady who works at the post office can encourage children in their overall development of relationships, and contribute to their understanding of inherent differences.

Similarly, children need to gain a broad understanding of different ideas. All children should be allowed the opportunity to explore the sheer thrill of listening to the 'library lady' personify characters and savour each word, pronounce it in a way that conveys value – to read the way that tired parents, simply anxious to put their children to sleep, may not always. A respect for literature and differing ideas should be developed in all young children: especially at their most impressionable stage, children need to be immersed in literature and concepts that they might not encounter at school, daycare or home. This exposure to 'uncensored' literature is necessary in order to allow children to form ideas and opinions entirely their own.

Often, young children are not given enough credit. Children need to learn about the environment, and they need to learn early. It is the responsibility of the community to teach young children about sustainability by *example*. A respect for the environment should be instilled in children at an early age by developing fun and interactive games and methods to learn about the environment, and explaining things in clear and simple terms. Children need to go on tours of recycling depots and see what happens to all of the bottles they save; they need to take a field trip to understand the importance of old-growth forests.

Recreational activities are essential in encouraging an enjoyment for physical education, which plays a major part in lifelong health. Enjoyment of physical activity increases the likelihood that, as they grow up, children will continue this involvement., which generally improves confidence, as well as advances physical well being. Communities need to continue to promote interest in recreation by providing and maintaining parks and sports fields, sponsoring sports teams, and coaching or leading teams or groups.

Art and music programs are necessary to develop children's creativity at early ages and to provide children with a medium to express themselves. A selection of music, dance, drama, art, pottery and culinary arts should be offered, with the majority free or inexpensive for families with young children. Such options encourage the natural inventiveness of all children and allow a sense of individuality to develop.

Parents and schools are given too much responsibility in the education of young children. While these roles are vitally important, they cannot be allowed to become *all* important. Children need more education than they are exposed to in their homes, school or daycares: they need a better understanding of their broad surroundings and subsequently a more efficient development, particularly during their early years. Children need to develop and sustain relationships. They need to acquire a sense of respect for differences through these relationships and through the reading of all types of literature. They need to gain an understanding of the community's environmental surroundings. They need to be involved in creative and physical programs. Businesses and members of the community need to take the initiative and further involve themselves with providing broad educational opportunities for all children, to cultivate confidence, awareness and independence. After all, it takes a community to educate a child.