

Title of Training: Play-Based Learning is Real Learning

Board Present: Jennifer Bowman – President, Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Natasha Kile – Treasurer, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Harmony Benedict – Washington County Member-at-Large, Debbie Mays & Elizabeth Scudder – Advisory Board, Ex-Officio – Terri Teters

Participants Present: ??

The meeting was called to order at 7.00pm by Jennifer Bowman. Jennifer welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting. She thanked Asbell Elementary School in Fayetteville for hosting the meeting and allowing the tour of their program.

Business:

1. Nicole Bedard shared the success of the Educator's Night Out at The Amazeum on October 17th. Over 170 early childhood educators were in attendance. The next Educator's Night Out will be on Thursday 23rd January 2020. You will need to pre-register on the [Amazeum website](#).
2. Debbie Mays shared feedback from the annual AECA conference that was held last month in Little Rock. She said the feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive. She encouraged attendees to continue to send feedback and fill in their evaluations. Next year, the conference will be back at The Wyndham in North Little Rock 14-17th October. Debbie also pointed out that there is a dedicated T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Arkansas Scholarship Program page on the [AECA website here](#) for those interested in accessing higher education whilst still working.
3. Jennifer Bowman and Emma Tempest highlighted the membership app Wild Apricot that you can download to get access to membership information. An email will be sent out to current members with details of how to update your membership to show which affiliate you belong to – this helps us to send out specific information for our NWA members. If you are not yet a member, please visit the '[Join Us](#)' page to register, or contact our VP of Membership Michelle Weise at mdcrain@uark.edu. Our Secretary Emma Tempest can also help you with any technical difficulties or website queries at emma.tempest@hotmail.com.
4. Jennifer Bowman noted that the by-laws have been revised and are available on the NWAECA Facebook page for our members to read and give feedback on. Members will be able to vote at our December meeting so please make plans to attend! Jennifer also shared that as a board we are all volunteers, and we are always looking for volunteers to help with our affiliate – we always welcome your input so we can serve you best!
5. Natasha Kile, NWAECA Treasurer, reported that as of 27th Oct 2019 we have \$580.16 as our current balance with an outstanding check of \$22.42 from this evening's meeting.

Speaker: Kathleen Hale – Fayetteville Public Schools Pre-K Director & Principal Tracy Bratton
Host: Asbell Elementary School

Kathleen Hale thanked everyone for attending and posed the question, “When did you stop playing?” She highlighted a training from the University of Arkansas Early Care and Education Projects called ‘The Growing Brain’ that provides excellent information and research that supports play as the best way for children to learn. You can search for this training on the [PDR website](#). Kathleen explained that Asbell Elementary School has the highest poverty in the district. She has wanted to get developmentally appropriate Pre-K classes into this school to give students the best opportunities that they may not have had otherwise.

Kathleen stated that ‘play is the work of children’. When adults and teachers structure settings to encourage play, cooperative and individual developments are learned. Children develop many approaches to learning through play such as curiosity, initiative, problem solving, focused attention and persistence. Kathleen shared that sometimes the challenge of a play-based classroom is explaining to others that ‘play’ does not mean a free-for-all chaotic room that does not have structure. Play is not in opposition to rigorous classroom instruction. Integrating the two learning styles of instruction and play is very possible – “When play-based learning is done well, the classroom becomes a teacher.”

Kathleen shared the four pillars for optimal learning from Kathryn Hirsch-Pasek at the Department of Psychology at Temple University:

1. Individuals take an active role in the learning environment
2. They are engaged
3. Information is meaningful
4. Learners interact in a social context

This means that children learn best when they are mentally active, engaged, social, and can make meaningful connections to their lives – which are all characteristics of play. Kathleen looked deeper into different types of play such as social play (solitary, parallel and co-operative) and dramatic play (symbolic, sociodramatic, functional and constructive). She also discussed the cognitive skills that employers want in the future – remembering, problem solving, making decisions, processing information and learning language. All these skills can be learned through play that help them to develop foundational understanding in math, science and social studies, literacy and language.

Meeting was adjourned by Jennifer Bowman

Next Meeting: December 3, 2019 6.30pm-8.00pm Course ID: 17412

Host: Kindergrove Preschool & Children’s Center, 696 S 28th St, Rogers, Arkansas, 72758

Topic: Impact of Teachers’ Interactions with Infants & Toddlers

Presenter: Jenny Dura

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest