



The goal of the Families and Literacy Committee of the WSRA is to develop and carry out plans which convey to parents the value of involvement in reading activities with children.



Family Reading Fun

Do you think of playtime as a luxury, something that your children can do after all of their responsibilities and chores are completed? Well, according to Kristine Mraz, Alison Porcelli and Cheryl Tyler in their book *Purposeful Play*, play isn't a luxury it is a necessity. You may be wondering **why is it so important for children to engage in play?** Here are just a few reasons.

*Play helps with the development of a healthy emotional well-being in children.

*It helps to develop a child's social skills.

*Children are more active when they play. Play gives a child an opportunity to release energy in a positive way.

So what can parents do to encourage play?

*Offer children open ended toys to play with, such as Legos, blocks, sticks, boxes, dress up clothes, etc. This encourages more creativity and problem solving.

*Have children come up with their own ideas for play and then praise them once they get started. Be specific with your praise. For example say, "I like how you used the blocks to build a tower." Instead of, "Good job playing."

*Play with your child. It helps the child know he or she has the parent's full attention.

So the next time your child asks you to play, say yes. By doing so you are helping your child to develop and grow socially and emotionally. Plus, it's fun!

Family Tips

- Don't have a lot of toys to use for free play? Check with your local library. They may have a play area with toys for children to use. They may also have scheduled free play times or have toys available for check out.
- Do your children complain about being bored? Great! Use this as an opportunity to encourage free play that does not involve a screen. Remember to be reasonable though. Depending on the age of the child, 15 minutes may be a reasonable amount of time for free play. (Some screen time is okay but should be limited to 1-2 hours total per day.)

Members:

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Wisconsin State Reading Association www.wsra.org



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Author Spotlight



Antoinette Portis

A former creative director for Disney, Antoinette Portis has gone on to become a New York Times best-selling author and illustrator. She has written several award winning books including; Not A Box, Not A Stick, A Penguin Story, Kindergarten Diary and Princess Super Kitty.

The books Not A Box and Not A Stick are perfect reads to encourage free play. In both books, ordinary objects (a box and stick) are transformed into many different items such as a race car or a fishing pole. After reading these books, children will discover that when you use your imagination, the options are endless.

To learn more about Antoinette Portis or her books, go to antoinetteportis.com



Website Spotlight

Looking for more ideas for free play activities? Go to the National Association for the Education of Young Children website at families.naeyc.org. Do a keyword search for "play". You will find lots of articles and ideas all related to the importance of play.