Playmaker 202: Early Education
Training Manual
Practice of Playmaking
Life is good Playmakers Overview:

Life is good Playmakers, formerly Project Joy, is a national movement, started in 1989, to heal and strengthen children – especially those whose lives have been deeply impacted by trauma. Millions of our nation’s youngest children have experienced profound trauma in its many forms – community violence, abuse, neglect, natural disasters, and extreme poverty. Theirs is a tragic and largely silent epidemic. It receives a fraction of the attention and resources directed at other childhood illnesses, yet it cripples development, devastates young lives, and shortens life expectancy.

Play is an essential part of the cure for these wounded children. Empowering, joyful play with sensitive, caring adults can help to restore what trauma violently strips from a child. Life is good Playmakers ensures that the adults closest to these children – often frontline childcare providers like yourself - have the knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver the powerful medicine of play to the children who need it most. Our goal is that this manual, coupled with your experience at this training retreat, will help you use play to lovingly connect with your children, diminish their fears, renew their joy, and boost their capacity to learn and grow into healthy, happy adults.

The Impact of Childhood Trauma

Psychological trauma can be defined as an extremely threatening experience, or series of experiences, that completely overwhelms a child’s psychosocial capacity to cope. Sadly, exposure to childhood trauma has impacted millions of children nationwide (some estimate that as many as ¼ of the nation’s 80 million children have been victimized by trauma) and is considered by many to be the greatest health crisis facing our nation today.
In 1998, The United States Center for Disease Control conducted the largest study of its kind ever to show how exposure to trauma, which they called ACE (an acronym for Adverse Childhood Experience), was the root cause of many common diseases that prematurely claim the lives of millions of Americans each year. What they proved was that millions of Americans experience one or more ACEs during childhood. As a result of these experiences, many went on to develop social and emotional impairments. As a result of these impairments, some engaged in health risk behaviors (such as street drug use, drinking, smoking, etc) in an attempt to cope with the ensuing loneliness and emotional pain. In some cases, these health risk behaviors eventually led to disease and disability and, as a result in some cases, they even led to premature death (see Figure 1).

**Designed to Survive: How Children Respond to Trauma**

For all human beings, severe threat automatically triggers a physical response that is initiated by the oldest and most primitive region of our brain. This response, often referred to as the “fight or flight” response, is brilliantly designed to help us respond immediately to threat and hopefully help us get to safety. However, when the threat is
so severe that it overwhelms the individual and prevents them from taking effective action, the brain (and the entire person for that matter) can get thrown out of balance. In the words of esteemed trauma psychologist Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, “Preventing people from moving and taking effective action is what makes trauma trauma.” The bodies and minds of young children are even more susceptible to the impact of traumatic stress because their brains are still developing.

According to Dr. Bruce Perry, “Our brains develop in use-dependant ways.” This means that if people, especially children, are put into situations where they are constantly forced to respond to threat, then the areas of their brains that are responsible for responding to threat (which are the lower, more primitive regions of the brain) will develop more than other important regions of their brains. As a result, the development of higher brain regions, which are responsible for social, emotional and cognitive functioning, run the risk of being severely compromised.

In other words, forcing a developing child to focus on surviving instead of on loving, playing, and exploring has devastating long-term effects on their health and development.

**Fear Destroys Playfulness**

Psychologist and neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp conducted a very interesting research project examining how fear impacts playfulness in young, developing mammals. During his research, he discovered that playful engagement was instrumental in the brain development of young rats. To determine this, he looked at the brain development of rats that were raised in two different types of living environments. The first environment, which he called an “enriched environment,” consisted of several rats living together with lots of toys to explore (balls, tunnels, running wheels, etc). The second environment, which he called an “unenriched environment,” housed only a sole rat in an empty cage, with no toys. Over the course of several experiments, Panksepp found that rats living together in enriched environments had far greater dendrite development (neurological connections that are representative of brain development
and learning) than rats living alone in unenriched environments. He even learned that rats laugh during play. (But that’s a story for another time. Go to YouTube and search for “laughing rats” if you don’t believe me.)

Once Panksepp proved that rat pups did indeed play and learn, he decided to measure the impact that fear would have on play and learning. To do this, he measured the level of play activity of a group of rat pups (Figure 2) in an enriched environment. Once he determined their baseline level of play activity, he put a cat hair into their cage. As one might have guessed, upon smelling the cat hair, the rats became frightened and immediately stopped playing (Figure 3). Panksepp then removed the cat hair from the cage to see if the rats would return to their previous level of playfulness. Much to his surprise, the rats never returned to their previous level of play activity even after the “threat” (the cat hair) was removed (Figure 4). Sadly, it was concluded that exposure to severe threat, at a vulnerable young age, forever changed the development and behavior of these playful little mammals.
Obviously, human beings are not the same as rats. Although our autonomic responses to threat are actually quite similar to those of other mammals (including rats), our brains are far more evolved. We can think morecomplexly, feel more deeply, express a wider range of emotions, and have the potential to employ far more coping behaviors. In children, overwhelming fear can cause them to withdraw from once joyful activities, like playing (It’s difficult to pay attention to the toy blocks if your focus needs to be on basic survival.) Overwhelming fear can also cause difficulties forming trusting relationships, as well as induce feelings of powerlessness and despair.

**Playfulness - the single most important trait of childhood**

We often ask professionals who dedicate their lives to helping the most wounded and vulnerable of our nation’s children one simple question - “If you had the power to nurture just one trait in a child that would best help that child overcome any and all adversity that they face in their lifetime, what would that trait be?” In other words, what trait best helps a child develop resiliency? We have had the honor of asking this question to thousands of outstanding teachers, social workers, coaches, psychologists, psychiatrists, parents, and others, and have heard some great answers - answers like trust, confidence, self-esteem, discipline, and creativity to name a few. One answer that we almost never hear, and the one that we believe to be most important to children, is the trait of playfulness. **Playfulness is the motivation to freely and joyfully engage with, connect with, and explore the surrounding world.** What could be more important than that? Playfulness is an approach to life – an attitude. It is a spirit with which one can approach every (and we mean every) aspect of life – the good, the bad, and the ugly.
Play v. Playfulness

When most people think of play, they usually think of it in terms of a type of activity – let’s say playing baseball, swinging on a swing, and/or making sand castles in a sandbox. However, our belief is that an activity alone can’t be considered play unless it is engaged playfully (Figure 5 is a pretty good example).

I would suggest that on any given Saturday afternoon, at ball fields across America, there are lots of children who are “playing” baseball without any sense of joy, passion, connection, or empowerment. For those children, “working” baseball would be a far more accurate description of their activity.

On the other end of the spectrum, activities that we generally think of as work - such as doing math homework, raking leaves, cooking dinner, and/or cleaning one’s bedroom - can be better described as “play” if they are approached in a playful manner. According to British historian Arnold Toynbee, “The supreme
accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.” At Life is good Playmakers, we couldn’t agree more.

**Barriers to Playfulness**

For children who have been deeply impacted by trauma, engaging the world playfully is difficult. As Panksepp’s research with rat pups suggests, it is likely that exposure to overwhelming threat during a child’s formative years can alter their potentially “playful brain” – one that is open to exploration and connection – and turn it into more of a “surviving brain” that is forced to primarily focus on avoiding threat (See Figure 6).

![Figure 6](image)

In other words, when basic survival is a child’s primary goal, it is impossible for them to engage the world playfully. What does it take for a child to engage the world playfully? It takes the cultivation of vital social, emotional, and cognitive traits such as confidence, trust, joy, creativity, passion, and love. We believe that this collection of internal traits, as well as others, can be simply organized into four domains of playfulness.
The Domains of Playfulness

Life is good Playmakers has classified the four domains of playfulness as Joyfulness, Social Connection, Internal Control, and Active Engagement. In order for a child to reach their full potential of playfulness, they must excel in each of these four vital areas (See Figure 7).

Joyfulness

Joyfulness is defined as the child’s sense of love, fulfillment, and hope that is expressed with displays of pleasure and exuberance. It differs from happiness in that it is more stable and far less influenced by external factors. For example, as a die-hard Red Sox fan, I can’t say that I am happy when they lose. However, my joyfulness allows me to still love the team and remain hopeful and optimistic about what tomorrow’s game may bring. Joy is not the absence of sadness. It is the spirit of love and hope that remains deep inside you that gives you the strength and courage to persevere despite the sadness. I am reminded of one of my favorite jokes in which a
seven-year-old boy is joyfully singing and dancing in the outfield during a Little League baseball game. His dad arrives at the game a little late, sees his son having the time of his life and proceeds to ask him the score. Overjoyed, the little boy shouts that the score is 27 to nothing! Excited, the dad shouts back, “Wow! You guys are winning 27 to nothing?” The little boy replies, “Heck no dad, we’re losing 27 to nothing!” Surprised, the dad asks, “Then what are you so happy about?” To which the boys proudly replies, “We haven’t even been up yet!”

This joyful little boy could have responded in many different ways to his dad’s question. He could have said that he was happy to be playing baseball; happy to feel the warm sun on his face; happy to have a dad who cares enough to watch his baseball game, or a whole host of other little “blessings.” Joy is not dependant on the score but rather on our “love of the game.” It is our loving and hopeful spirit that gives us the strength to never to give up.

**Social Connection**

*Social Connection is defined as the child’s cooperative interactions with others and the surrounding world.* Dean Martin once sang, “You’re nobody ‘til somebody loves you,” and Barbara Streisand once sang, “People who need people are the luckiest people in the world.” Who knew that this once famous crooner and this still kind-of-famous diva were such experts on attachment? People – especially children – need adults to love and care for them. It’s as simple as that. It is this love and caring that enables children to develop secure attachments that ultimately give them the confidence to explore the world around them. This confidence is essential to helping children reach their playful potential.

Humans are herd animals. We travel in packs (called families / communities) and don’t do well in isolation. This does not mean that we don’t enjoy being alone at times. People – especially those who have the option of returning to loving networks of social supports – also enjoy moments (even hours and days) of solitude. Yet the universal act of laughter gives us good reason to believe we need connection with others. It has
been said that laughter has no foreign accent. Think about it. It’s true. All over the world, human beings “choose” to laugh (did you know that most laughter is not an involuntary response to humor but a conscious choice) in order to signal to other people that they are safe to connect with. Perhaps it’s true that the shortest distance between two people is a laugh.

**Internal Control**

*Internal Control is defined as the child’s sense of safety, worth, and competence that allows them to engage with the surrounding world.* All people, especially children, need to feel some level of safety and competence in order to effectively explore the world around them. After all, the world is a terrifying place for someone who views him or herself as powerless and incompetent. Children deserve to feel as if they are safe, special, and of great value. From this foundation of safety and competence, we develop a psychosocial “base camp” from where we can embark on life’s adventures and return to when these adventures prove too difficult or when we need to rest and “restock our supplies.” One of my favorite Internal Control stories is about a five-year-old girl who is drawing a picture in her art class. The teacher, seeing her hard at work, asks her what she is drawing. The little girls inform her that she is drawing a picture of God. Surprised, the teacher says to the little girl, “But nobody knows what God looks like.” To which the little girl replies firmly, “They will when I’m done!” It is this kind of confidence and healthy “self-centeredness” that allow for us to continue to go out into the world and explore despite all of our vulnerabilities.

**Active Engagement**

*Active engagement is defined as the child’s enthusiastic and complete immersion in an activity.* In other words, Active Engagement is not only about being completely in the moment, but really enjoying that moment too. Children who have experienced severe trauma have difficulty being in the moment. They are often so preoccupied by their past experiences and so anxious about what they can expect (or not expect) in the future, that as a result, traumatized children often find it exceedingly
difficult to be present. Without the ability to be in the moment, healing can’t occur. Experiences of safety, joy, wonder, and love can only be felt in the moment. Even when we reflect on past joys, it is the moment of reflection, not the past experience, where joy is felt. With this in mind, we need to create environments where children can experience moments of wonder, passion, imagination, and joy—moments that are powerful enough to help soothe past fears and sorrows, and prepare a space in which joy can take root.

Action Steps

Now it’s time to put all this theory into action! One thing to keep in mind is that the best way to bring joy and playfulness to your children is to have it yourself! You need to be a living example of joy, love, creativity, and peace in order to nurture these same qualities in your children. With this in mind, we strongly encourage you to actively and playfully participate in the following activities with your children. This way, all of you can lead healthier, more joyful lives. Turn the page for some fun activities that we recommend. We have no doubt you’ll be creating many more of your own in the days ahead!

Breathe deeply, smile, and enjoy…
**Energizing Yo’Play® Activities**

**BODY SHAKES**

Standing around the circle, you can talk about the energy that we all have in our bodies that sometimes gets stuck. Children are each asked which part of their bodies they would like to shake and wake, in order to release that energy and get it moving. If a child suggests hands, the whole group shakes their hands while chanting, "hands shake, hands shake, hands shake, STOP!" If the next child suggests shoulders, the whole groups shakes their shoulders while chanting, "shoulder shakes, shoulder shakes, shoulder shakes, STOP!" The game continues until each child has had a turn to suggest a type of "body shake." After each turn, we thank each child for his or her great suggestion.

**BLAST OFF**

The children start standing with hands up over their head palms facing each other. They are asked to imagine that their bodies are powerful rocket ships. Each child is given an opportunity to choose a place that they would like the group to “blast off” to - it could be anywhere from Mars to Hawaii, or even to the local playground. When everyone is ready, start to countdown from 5 as they lower their bodies with each count. Have the children take little sips of breath as they lower. After the count of 1 the children blast off by jumping straight up as high as they can and simply breathing out or making a noise as they jump. When the children land they can explore the fantasy of their new environment. What do they see? What do they hear? What do they do?

**MOO & MEOW**

The children start on all 4’s (hands and knees on the ground– hands under the shoulders and knees under the hips). As they breathe in have them arch their backs and raise their heads and make the noise “moooooooooo” like a cow, then have them breathe out and round their backs and look at their belly button – in this pose have them “meeeeeeowww” like a cat – encourage them to stretch like a cat does. The teacher may want to ask, “What kind of cat are you and what kind of cow are you? Where do you live, are you wild or are you someone’s pet?”

Other animal movements that the teacher can link to sounds include having children act like a dog, bird, a bee, a lion or a gorilla. Allow the children to create their own version of this animal. The teacher may want to join in the fun too!
GOOD MORNING SNAKES

Children lie on their bellies in a circle on the parachute. With their faces down, the teacher guides them through a fantasy that they are quiet, sleepy snakes slithering alone in a field. The teacher and children chant, "slithering, slithering, slithering, hssssssssssss" when the snakes hiss, using their arms for leverage, they lift their heads and shoulders off the floor while trying to keep their lower bellies on the floor. Once they have risen, they can say, "Good morning snakes!"

TARZAN TAPS

The children start in a circle standing up. Making two fists the children will use their fists to pound and tap their chest, under their arms, and all over their bodies. While tapping their body parts invite them to howl, yowl and yodel. Children can gently tap their head as well, energizing the brain. Children can even pretend they are in a jungle moving around the room, imagining swinging through the trees.

GORILLA WALKS

Ask the children walk to one side of the room. Have them place their hands and feet on the floor. Then see if they can tuck their toes, straighten their legs and lift their bottom in the air making an upside down letter “V” with their body. From this “downward dog” position, invite the children to lift their head, look forward, and slowly walk on all fours like a gorilla to the other side of the room. For added joy, invite the children to make gorilla noises as they move.

Transition Yo’Play© Activities

WELCOME WAVES

Very simply, the children lie on their bellies in a circle. The facilitator guides the children to look around the circle at all of their friends. Once everybody has made eye contact, the facilitator guides the children to wave at each other and share greetings (i.e. “Good Morning Shandra,” “Hello Albert,” “Hi Keshau,” “Goodnight Ms. Joyce”).

One fun variation, after the group has had ample time to welcome each other, is to have the group make different faces at each other (i.e. lemon taste face, silly face, fishy face, lion roar face, monkey face, etc.).

HOT, HOT HANDS (Rubbing, Rubbing, Rubbing, Warm)

Sitting in a circle the facilitator asks the group if they are ready to get warmed-up! He or she guides the children to quickly rub the palms of their hands together. The faster they rub, the warmer their hands will become (rub, rub...rub-rub...rub-rub... waaarrrm). You can tell the children that the warmth that they feel in their hands is happy energy or love, which they can share with other parts of their body through touch. Guide them to use their hot hands on different parts of their body to help them warm-up and get ready to play together.
**Lion’s Breath**

Ask the children to sit on their shins and heels with their palms resting on their thighs. The teacher then invites children to pretend that they are big, powerful lions waiting to let out a roar. Have children place their fingers as claws on top of their thighs. At first they sit still and quiet and then they take a deep breath in through the nose. As the child exhales he or she moves forward so that the chest puffs out and the legs straighten. The child roars with their mouth wide open. The teacher can have them quietly “rrroooar” three times and then get louder and do three more ripping roars. Growls, grunts, yawns, and purrs are welcome too. Repeat several times.

**Body Polishing**

The teacher invites each child to choose his or her own scarf or piece of cloth and gives some time for the children to explore and play with the scarves. The teacher explains that the scarf can be used to shine something up until it looks like new. The teacher asks children to chose for themselves and then pretend that they are anything that could use some polishing – like a fancy sports car, or even simply playful children that need a bright shine. Let them take turns naming different body parts that need to be polished. After the children are finished polishing, “ooohhhhh” and “ahhhhhhh” encouraging children to admire each other. The teacher may want to play music during this exercise, inviting children to dance to their polishing.

**Calming Yo’Play© Activities**

**Beautiful Butterflies**

Children sit on their bottoms in a circle with the soles of their feet together. Children are directed to hold onto their ankles and bring them in closer to the bodies. They can then “flutter their wings” by bouncing their knees softly up and down. The facilitator can give each child a chance to share with the group where they would like to fly. While flying the group can chant, “fluttering, fluttering, fluttering, laaaaaannttonnnd.” This activity offers a simple, repetitive gross motor movement that helps expend energy while also calming the body.

**Rocking Horse**

Children lie on their bellies in a circle on the parachute. They are asked to lift their feet up to the sky and gently clap them together. They are then asked to bring their hands back towards their fast feet and see if they can “catch” them. If children are able to grab both feet with their hands, they can pull on their ankles, lift their chests, and rock a bit back and forth like a rocking horse. After several moments, the children are instructed to let go of their feet, turn their head to one side, and lay down comfortably on their belly.

**Happy Bug**

Children lie on their backs with their feet in the air. They are then guided to reach their hands up between their legs and grab hold of their feet. Once they have grabbed their feet they are guided to gently rock, sway, and breathe.
FLOPPY SPAGHETTI BODIES

Everyone spreads out in the space and rests comfortably on the floor. It is best if children can lie on their backs. The teacher encourages the group to pretend to be like spaghetti - floppy, soft, and bendy. The teacher reminds them that spaghetti does not think, move, or talk. The teacher then walks around the room and asks permission from each child to test the floppy spaghetti bodies. He or she tests the spaghetti by lifting up a foot or a hand. The player’s limbs should be limp and offer no resistance. If a child is stiff, or helps the teacher by lifting up a foot or a hand on his or her own, the teacher gently coaches the child not to help but to let go like a limp piece of spaghetti. The teacher may want to lower the lights and play soothing instrumental music. To rouse the group, the teacher can slowly direct them to gently wiggle fingers and toes first, then rub their hands together and finally stretch in whatever way feels good while letting out a big yawn. Then, the teacher asks them to roll back up to sitting, fresh, and alert.

HIDING MOUSE

The teacher asks children to sit on their heels, and open their knees a little (so that the belly relaxes between the thighs). Bending at the hips, the child folds forward, letting their shoulders drop down. Arms lie back along the sides of the legs with open palms facing upward. Forehead comes to the floor. The teacher encourages the children to breathe and maybe even snore. To have some more fun with this pose, the teacher can have the children pretend that they are mice – resting and then awakening (peek-a-boo style). The teacher can let them play around as mice together, crawling around on the floor, sniffing for cheese, and perhaps even running from a cat!
APPLE PICKING JUMPS

Standing in a circle, the children are guided through a fantasy where they are standing under a great big apple tree (or any fruit tree will do) and that way up high are a bunch of delicious pieces of ripe fruit just waiting to be picked. Then children are guided to reach up, then jump up several times in order to pick some fresh apples or other tree fruit. You can have each child who wants to select a fruit to pick and name where the fruit grows so all the children can jump to pick tree fruit, bend down to pick berries, or climb trees to pick coconuts. After all of the imaginary fruit is gathered and placed on the parachute, the children can grab and shake the parachute in order to make a huge fruit salad. You can also elaborate on the story of preparing the fruit for the salad, using gross motor movements and including the parachute.

BICYCLES

Children lie on their backs, bringing their knees to their chests and pointing their feet in the air. They are then invited to pretend that they are riding imaginary bicycles and guided to move their legs actively in a peddling motion. They are also invited to hold their arms out and pretend that they are holding onto their bicycle’s handlebars. Children are then asked where they would like to go on their bicycles. One at a time, each child chooses a destination and the children all peddle there (through turns, up hills, down hills, and even ringing their bells). Once the children reach their destination, the teacher can indulge the fantasy even more by having the children imagine they are exploring their chosen place.

PARACHUTE SPEEDWAY

We all know that preschoolers don’t need a fancy track to run around in circles! Simply spread a parachute out on the floor or grass and allow the children to run around it pretending that the parachute is the grass in the middle of a racing speedway (remind them to please keep off the grass). Children can pretend that they are racecars and you can have them practice starting, stopping, beeping their horn, turning their imaginary steering wheels, etc. Before allowing the children to run, guide them through a “safe driving lesson” by making sure that they are keeping their eyes on the road, moving in the same direction with traffic, and watching out for other cars. Once they understand the rules, allow them to run around the “track.” Remind them that if they want to rest their car, they can go to the garage (designate an area as the garage where children can choose to rest), and you can even include a body shop worker (another adult) who can help “fix dents” and soothe children when they need it. You can try guiding the fantasy initially by including commands such as “red light” (stop), “green light” (go) and “yellow light” (slow down). You can even guide them through a U-turn and allow them to run together in the opposite direction. The possibilities are endless.
**MAGIC BALL**

This is a great game to build imagination and creativity. Sitting in a circle we begin by passing the magic ball around to each member of the group. Once the ball has made it to everybody and is back to its starting point, we magically turn the ball into different things by having everyone chant together, “Magic Ball, Magic Ball, what will you be?” The child taking the turn announces the new kind of ball. For example we can create the Hot Ball, or the Cold Ball, or the Heavy Ball, or the Sticky Ball, or the Giggle Ball, or the Shaky Ball, the Cat Ball, Bird Ball (ANY ball at all) simply by having the group say a magic word or two (which they choose). Once the group has transformed the ball with the magic words, each of the balls then can be passed around the circle as the children imagine, pretend, and adjust. (For example, the hot ball could be passed quickly, the cold ball could make the children shiver, the sticky ball might be difficult to let go of, the giggle ball might make each child laugh, etc.).

**FEATHER BALL**

The children, now sitting in a circle on the parachute, are invited to choose a silk scarf. Once they have had the opportunity to briefly explore and play with the scarf, they are instructed to pack the scarf into a ball, toss it in the air, and catch it when it comes down. The group, in sync with the movements, sings out the chant, "feather ball, feather ball, feather ball, fly." After this activity is repeated several times, the teacher collects the scarves by making a "basketball hoop" with his or her arms and asking the children to try and toss the scarf through the hoop. It’s wonderful to be able to follow the children’s lead with this activity—and the Feather Ball and really become anything a child chooses. The rhythm and creativity are key!

Here are a couple of other scarf activities you can try:

**Bicycles**

Using two hands hold the scarf out in front of you in a straight line. Now you can pretend to pedal the scarf just like you would the pedals on a bicycle. Just like in Feather Ball, a chant can help make the game come alive. “Pedaling, Pedaling, Pedaling, Ring-Ring.” When chanting “Ring-Ring” you can pretend to ring the bell on a your bike to let the children know its time for a short rest. Try going slow uphill and fast downhill for a cool variation to the activity.

**Motorcycle**

Similar to Bicycles above, you begin this activity by holding the scarf out in front of you in a straight line with two hands. You and the children can pretend that these are the handlebars of a motorcycle. To drive the motorcycle, rev the throttle by twisting the scarf with your right hand. To slow down, screech on the brakes and turn the handlebars. Try this chant: “Vroom, Vroom, Vroom, Screech!” A lot of times children associate the sound of screeching brakes with car accidents so every time I do this activity I am sure to say, “No crash” when I am done. The children seem to like that part a lot.

**Helicopter**

Holding the scarf in one hand swing it around your head like a helicopter propeller. You can chant, “Flying, Flying, Flying, Land.” When you chant “Land”, bring the scarf down to the ground in front of you.

**More Snowballs!!!**

The scarves also make a great addition as snowballs in the Snowball Freeze game.
FROGGER

Have the children squat, bending their knees out to the sides and lowering their bottoms almost to the floor. Encourage them to try putting their palms together in front of their chest. The teacher helps them find their balance by shifting their weight back and forth from foot to foot. Invite the children to pretend they are frogs. Children can hop around and croak. Encourage them to make really big leaps. Then make a path of several Lily Pads (Poly Spots) that stretch from one end of the pond to the other. You can use ropes to mark both sides of the pond. The children try to hop from Lily Pad to Lily Pad to get across the pond. You can also gradually increase the challenge by starting with the Lily Pads very close to one another and gradually moving them farther apart as children go across several times and build confidence. Great music makes this game even more exciting!

TIGHTROPE WALKING

This is a really simple game. Take a couple ropes, tie them together, stretch them out in a straight line across the floor and see if the children dare to walk across the “high wire.” You can set the stage with a guided fantasy to help them try to imagine (if they want) walking across a tightrope way up high in the sky! No problem if they step off, just hop back on and keep going! Again, the right music can really add to the enjoyment of the activity!

SLEEPING WORMS

Also super simple. Tie three ropes together at one end of all three ropes and lay them on the ground so the tied-together ends are close together and easiest to jump over, while the untied ends are spread apart from each other to create a greater challenge to jump over. (This will look a little like a sideways V with a line in the middle!) You can pretend the ropes are sleeping worms and see if the children can jump over them. The children can decide if they want to jump over the narrow end, the middle, or the very wide end…or even if they’d prefer to tiptoe in between the sleeping snakes. The more worms used and the further they are spread, the tougher the challenge. What music might add to this game?

CHALLENGE JOURNEY = (Frogger + Tightrope Walking + Sleeping Worms)

This is pretty self-explanatory. Set up a series of gross-motor challenges that your children have already learned in a sort of obstacle course or Challenge Journey! You can even set it up in a big loop or a set-up that works for the space you have and that lets the children waiting for their turn to watch and cheer on their teammates. To increase the excitement perhaps you can use a stopwatch to see how long it takes the whole group to complete the course together. For example, the kids can hop to a certain spot, then balance and walk across the high wire, and jump over some sleeping snakes before getting back in line. There are so many cool, imaginative combinations from which to choose. Be creative and have the children help come up with imaginative fantasies to go along with each simple action. You can also use music to help designate “rounds” of the game—play it while the children are on the Challenge Journey course, and then stop it in between rounds.
**SNOWBALL FREEZE**

The teacher spreads Fleece Balls throughout the play space and asks the children to imagine that these Fleece Balls are fluffy, soft, snowballs. The teacher can guide the children through a snowball improvisation of “scooping and packing” the snowballs instead of just picking them up off the ground. The teacher then asks permission to underhand toss a snowball at each child. The teacher then asks the children if they would like to play a snowball game. Children may only throw snowballs at the teacher and the teacher may only throw snowballs at the children. When the teacher says, “Snowball freeze!” everybody has to freeze until the teacher says “Snowball play!” and the game resumes. You can use the parachute as a safe snow fort where children and teachers can go to rest. Nobody can throw a snowball at anyone who is in the safe snow fort. All players can also choose not to have a snowball thrown at them by holding out their hand and saying, “Stop” before a ball is thrown. This game can also be played with music like in Freeze Dance.

**SHOO FLY (component of Dicki Johnson Macy’s Rainbow Dance program)**

This dance allows children to explore different ways of moving together and alone. Children hold onto a circle of ropes or circle around a parachute holding on with one hand. Once the music begins, the group marches and sings along to the chorus: “Shoo Fly, don’t bother me (3 times)… I’ll show you what I want to be!” At this point everyone yells “Put it down!” placing the circle of ropes on the ground. Children are then invited to separate and find a space in the room to “wiggle like a worm, swim like a fish, jump like a kangaroo, crawl like spider, or tip-toe like a mouse,” following the directions in the song. In between each animal movement, children transition back to the circle singing, “Come find our circle, ready - here we GO!” then repeat the “Shoo Fly” chorus and circle march. After the final chorus that proceeds the “Tip toe quiet as a mouse” verse, “Put it down” is replaced with “Now sit down” signaling players to sit in a circle.

**WASHING MACHINE**

Spread the parachute out on the ground and ask the children to stand around it. The inside of the parachute is the washing machine. Each child can have a turn to sit in the center of the parachute and get washed. Once a child sits down in the middle, ask half the children to stand facing the child’s shoulder that is sitting in the middle. The other half of the children can stand facing the child’s other shoulder. To start the washing machine, one half of the children pulls the parachute towards them, sliding it across the ground, and shouts, “Splish!” Next, the other half of the children pulls the parachute back in their direction and shouts, “Splash!” To keep the machine washing, keep pulling and sliding back and forth three times, shouting, “Splish-Splash, Splish-Splash, Splish-Splash, STOP!” You can let the child in the middle know that it’s okay to use their hands so they can keep themselves balanced if they would like to. The child can also stop the wash at anytime they would like by saying, “Stop!” For safety, the parachute should be placed on a soft surface (grass, carpet, or a mat) and two teachers should be positioned across from one another splishing and splashing with the children.
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NAMEBALL

Children sit pretzel-legs in a circle. The teacher introduces the name ball to the group (any soft ball will do) and passes it around the circle. When each child has the name ball in their possession, they are asked to say their name anyway they would like (for example, if they are feeling happy, they may choose to say their name in an upbeat and happy way, if they are feeling shy they may choose to say their name quietly, if they are tired they may choose to say their name with a big yawn, if they are feeling strong they may choose to shout out their name...etc.). Once the child says their name, the rest of the group echoes back that child’s name just as he or she originally said it. If a child chooses not to say their name, the teacher can ask if that child would like for the group to help them say their name. If the child still declines, the teacher should thank the child for telling the group what they want and let the child know how happy they are that the child is part of the group.

NEWSBALL

In this game, the children sit in a circle and use the Newsball (any soft ball will do) to tell news about themselves with the group. Everyone in the group will “share” news, even if they do not tell news, simply because they’re in the circle. Everyone shares news either by telling or listening! The news may be about something they did, something they like, something that happened to them, a favorite TV show or movie, what they had for breakfast, anything! It’s also important to specifically say that their news can be any kind of news (and give some examples of kinds of news: happy news, sad news, serious news, silly news, difficult news, funny news, etc.) Really, ANY kind of news! When a child is holding the ball, they can first say how they would like the group to respond to their news, and then they can share their news. Some children may want to get a standing ovation after their news, others might like a silent appreciation as the group puts their hand to their heart, and still other children may want to make up their own unique response. The rest of the group listens to the news and responds as the “teller” asked, and then raise their hand or ask for the ball when they would like a turn to tell news.

SHAKE IT UP

The children stand in a circle holding onto the handles of the parachute. The teacher either invites the children to begin shaking the parachute or asks for their ideas about what they could do with the parachute, and the children decide to shake it. While they are shaking, the teacher leads in chanting, "shake-shake, shake-shake, shake-shake, stooooooop (a hand motion accompanies the stop command)!" Teachers and children can explore their creativity by thinking of all kinds of different shakes to do, making sure every child who wants to pick/make up a shake gets a turn. If a new shake gets invented, just ask the inventor to demonstrate it, so everyone else can do it too!
DOWN, UP & UNDER

Standing in a circle holding onto the edges of the parachute, the children lower and raise the parachute slowly as low and high as they can, while the facilitator chants/sings, “Down, up, down, up, down, up…”. When the teacher says, “UNDER!” (always following the third “Up”) the group lifts up the parachute together and goes under. If time permits, children can have a turn being the leader and guiding the “Down, up, down, up, down, up, UNDER!” chant. Once under the parachute, the teacher can take the children on an imaginary trip (i.e., under the sea on a scuba trip, in a cave to explore, through a forest, etc.) to see all the make-believe things they can think of!

ONE THROUGH FIVE

The teacher thinks of five different actions and gives each action a number. For example, one is jump up and down, two is run around in a circle, three is do a jumping jack, four is give somebody in the group a high five, and five is moo like a cow. The group then spreads out so everyone has enough space and is invited to dance when they hear music. The teacher calls out numbers and the group then responds to the numbers with the appropriate actions. The faster the numbers change – the more wild the game gets. Children can be given opportunities to think of actions and/or call out numbers. If five actions are too many for your children to remember, try three. It's also a good idea for each movement to includes options if necessary to help children feel comfortable doing them, and that they are practiced during the instructions/set up of the game.

SMOOSHLIE RIDES

The parachute is spread out on the floor and one child is invited to sit in the middle. All of the other children and teacher stand around the parachute, grab the edges of the parachute (not the handles as they break easily) and move in a circle giving the child in the middle a nice merry-go-round ride. While they are moving the group is singing the following song...

“One little Smooshie on the parachute.
One little Smooshie on the parachute.
Going round & round & round & round & round,
And round & round & round & round & round.
Going round & round & round & round & round,
And round & round - let's go the other way…”
(Change directions and repeat verse, but very last line is sung:)
“And round & round - and now... we’re... slowing... down.”

Change directions and repeat song until you start to feel dizzy and then stop. Seriously, as long as each child has the opportunity to get a ride, you can make each ride as long or as short as you’d like.

THE LITTLE ENGINE

The parachute (the train) is spread on the floor and one child (the conductor) sits pretzel-legged on one end of it. Once the child is seated, the other children hand him or her fleece balls (toy, treats and/or other cargo) that need to be delivered across town. Once the cargo is loaded on, the other children hold onto the opposite end of the parachute (facing the direction
they want to move the parachute) and begin chanting, “We think we can. We think we can.” The children then pull the parachute and give the seated child and cargo a ride across the play space. This game is played until all of the children have a chance to be the conductor if they would like to be. Sometimes, if the group is really strong, more than one conductor can be given a ride at a time (just have them sit one in front of the other). Kids love it when teachers take their turn to be the conductor too!

**Caution:** To protect the conductor from falling back when the ride begins, a teacher should stand behind the child (not on the parachute) and spot them until they are safe and stable. The seated children can also hold onto the parachute behind them, lift it around their waist and make a little back brace to help stabilize them.

**Team Blast Off**

One at a time, each child is invited to lie in the middle of the parachute on his or her back, with hands folded behind his or her head—making sure hands are between head and floor. The rest of the group circles around the parachute. AT LEAST TWO teachers are needed for this game. The child in the middle is asked if they want a little lift, a medium lift, or a big lift. They are also asked what name they would like to be called when the group lifts them. When instructed, the children circling the parachute are instructed to grab the edges of the parachute with both hands. The group facilitator slowly counts to three. On three, the group pulls back on the parachute together (stepping back works better than arm lifting) causing the person in the middle to rise. While pulling, the group chants the name of the child in the middle. The group then brings the child slowly and safely down to the ground and repeats this process three times. All children are offered an opportunity to be lifted by the group. For safety, the parachute should be placed on a soft surface (grass or a mat) and two teachers (with strong backs) should be positioned across from one another at the child’s sides (not at head and foot), to lift the parachute. Extra adults are always welcome in this game!

**Parachute Surprise**

The children all stand around the parachute holding onto its edges and they are asked to review their names before the game starts. (Name ball could even be played first!) Then, the children are asked to close their eyes (or turn around) and slowly shake the parachute. They can also either chant, “parachute, parachute...” or sing a song that everyone knows. While the children’s eyes are closed, the teacher walks around the circle and taps one child on the shoulder. The child who is tapped goes under the parachute and lies down on his or her side. When the teacher calls out, “surprise” – the children bring the parachute down to a level that’s comfortable for everyone, and they look around the circle. Their job is to try to figure out which of their classmates is under the parachute.

**The Cool Breeze Blows 1.0**

Chairs are arranged in a circle with one chair for each child and the teacher(s). The teacher starts the game by saying, “The cool breeze blows for everyone who...” and then completes the sentence by saying something that some of the children may have in common. For example, the teacher might say, “The cool breeze blows for everyone who loves ice cream” or “The cool breeze blows for anyone wearing a red shirt” or “The cool breeze blows for anyone who has a baby sister,” etc. Anyone seated in the circle for which the statement rings true, simply has to get up and move to a different seat in the circle (switching seats with other
classmates with whom they have something in common). If only one child gets up, leaving them unable to switch seats with a classmate, they can simply take a bow and sit back down in their original seat. It is important to give children permission to choose how much they want to share with the group. All children can elect to stay seated even if “the cool breeze blows for them.” When the teacher has offered enough “cool breeze blows for…” questions for the children to be engaged and understand the game, you can then ask children for ideas. They can simply volunteer for a turn, and when you pick them, they say what the “cool breeze blows for” to start the round.

**Example questions**
The cool breeze blows for anyone who:
- Has a brother or sister
- Has a pet at home
- Likes to play outside
- Likes to dance
- Likes to draw pictures
- Likes to use their imagination
- Likes to eat pizza
- Likes to read stories

**Cool Breeze Blows 1.5 (A fun variation of the Cool Breeze Blows):** Instead of saying “The cool breeze blows for anyone who...” you can start the game by saying “The big bunny hops for anyone who...” and that lets everyone know to move to a new seat by hopping. You can make up a new phrase for lots of different movements – hopping, skipping, galloping, shuffling, crawling, slithering and many more!

**WRECKING BALL**
Using paper cups or cardboard blocks, the children are asked to build a structure. They are told ahead of time that they will have time to build the city of towers and structures, then they will make sure that everyone is safely out of the city they built, and finally they be given a chance to knock it down with fleece wrecking balls, until it is completely knocked down. The teacher can use ropes to make a line for the children to stand behind while tossing the wrecking balls. The further the line is from the structure, the more challenging the activity. The teacher and children can decide whether the children should build one structure as a large group or build several structures in one area as smaller groups or pairs. When the children wreck what they built, the teacher can retrieve the balls from across the rope line, until the structure is knocked down. This is a fun activity that gives children experiences of both building and wrecking! Remember that music can really add to and influence the feeling of this game.

**MUSICAL SHARES (aka: Cooperative Musical Chairs)**
This is played just like musical chairs but with a cooperative twist. Chairs are set-up in a circle. To begin, there should be one chair for every child playing in the game. The backs of the chairs should face towards the middle of the circle. The children dance around the outside of the circle to music. When the music stops, all the children must find a chair. After each round, the teacher removes one chair. The children once again march around the chairs until the music stops. Again, the children need to find chairs. This time however, there will not be
enough chairs for each child to have his or her own chair. Children must cooperate and share chairs so that everyone has a seat. When all children are seated, another chair is removed, and the next round begins. If teachers feel that sitting on laps and rushing to chairs is unsafe for their children, they can use circles made with ropes instead of “chairs.” When the music stops, children must find a circle to put at least one foot inside.

**WAVES & SPLASH**

Standing in a circle holding onto the edges of the parachute, the children gently shake the parachute as the facilitator chants repeatedly, “Waves, waves, waves, and SPLASH!” When the facilitator says, “SPLASH!” the group lifts up the parachute together and goes under. If time permits, children can have a turn being the leader and guiding the “Waves, waves, waves, SPLASH!” chant. Once under the sea (the parachute) the facilitator can take the children on an imaginary scuba trip to see all the make-believe sea life!

**TAPS 1.0**

Sitting in a circle (with one adult and as few children as possible in each circle), make sure each circle has a beach ball. It’s helpful to make the circles close enough so there aren’t big holes between children, but still enough space to roll the ball around in the middle. You can put on some relaxed, fun music to let the children know when to start simply rolling the beach ball around the circle by tapping it. (Jack Johnson’s “Better Together” is one recommendation for beach ball tapping.) When the music stops, you can stop tapping the beach ball.

**TAPS 2.0**

This game is recommended once children have learned and enjoy Taps 1.0. The teacher can introduce the new game by demonstrating how to tap with a partner. Simply face each child, one at a time and ask if they would like to tap the ball back to you. If they want to play, tap the ball to them and have them tap it back. The entire group can cheer for each child as they take turns. When the group is ready to pair up, the teacher makes sure each pair has space to play and their own beach ball. Balloons are a nice alternative if you don’t have lots of beach balls or you want the ball to move a little more slowly. Again, the teacher can put on some relaxed, fun music to let the children know when to start tapping the beach ball back and forth. When the music stops, everyone stops tapping the beach ball.

**TAPS 3.0**

This game is usually super fun for adults, and is most successful with young children when they have learned and mastered Taps 1.0 and 2.0 FIRST. This level of Taps offers children a chance to work in small groups of 3-4 to tap the beach ball (or balloon) to each other while listening to some enjoyable, calm music.
Playin’ School
Ideas to make academic instruction more joyful, connecting, empowering & inspiring.

(Activities in this section developed by Dwayne Núñez, Boston Public School teacher. They can be used with specific literacy skills as described, or you can apply them in ways that work best for you!)

I. LETTER IDENTIFICATION

Bring Me the Letter

Sitting in a circle, the children are given large index cards with a letter written on each one. They are asked to place the cards on the floor in front of where they are seated and where everyone can see them. Ask children to turn to their neighbor and say their letter and make the sound. If they do not know what the letter is, they can ask their neighbor for help! You can then look around the circle and say for a letter or sound, and invite the child with that letter or sound to bring it to you ANY way they want. Children may hop, crawl, dance, walk, anything (make sure to give some options to start). It’s a good idea to ensure every child gets a turn. It may also be fun to ask for 2-3 letters at a time and have children create a “move” together or just do their own thing (at the same time).

Hot Letter [Like Hot Potato]

Write individual letters on various tennis balls and make sure you have good “round and round” music to play. Start by handing out tennis balls, interspersing them throughout the circle [for example, 5-6 balls for 20 children]. When the music starts, children pass the balls around the circle. When the music stops, the child that has the ball gets to turn to their neighbors and talk about their letter – what it is, what sound it makes – and together they can come up with 1-2 words that start with that letter. You can move around the circle and check in with each group as you listen to their words to ensure comprehension. When you have finished your rounds, start the music and begin again!

II. PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Sound Moves 1.0

This is a game that combines sounds and movement. It can be used when children are practicing each letter’s sound when sounding out words, or for identifying syllables of words. For example, to practice phonemic awareness, you can give children turns to look at a word that you’ve written down, for example, a word like CAT. Sounding out the letters, the child gets to choose a movement for every individual sound. For example, they may do a karate kick on C, lift arms overhead on A, and stand proudly with hands on hips for T. Make sure to say the complete word at the end with a final swoop of the hand (or any “end” movement that works for
your kids!). After the child finishes the word, the group repeats it back using the same movement.

**Sound Moves 2.0**

In this slightly more advanced version, any child that wants to hear a “secret” word whispered in their ear by the teacher can choose to go in the middle and do their “sound moves,” showing the action and making the individual sounds. Then the group puts it all together and guesses the word!

**III. PHONICS**

**Sound Moves 3.0**

Instead of raising their hand to answer a question, children can express themselves through more playful movements. Write a word on a little whiteboard/chalkboard and shows the group the word. Any child who wants to say that word out loud can move in the offered way to show they want a turn! For example, they can run in place, stomp their feet, get up and dance, and the list goes on! The selection of the movement can be decided by the adult or by children’s suggestions before each word is shown, but that is up to you. This is a fun way to have kids “raise their hands” at any time, not only during literacy lessons!

**IV. SIGHT WORDS**

**Treasure Cave**

In this game, the parachute becomes a cave and sight words, the treasure. You can write the sight words on index cards or colorful paper and place them under the parachute. Once the treasure is in the cave (i.e. words under the parachute), invite children to go on a treasure-hunt/adventure by coming around the parachute. To begin the game, ask what they will need to go on our adventure (boots, flashlights, jacket, snacks, camera…whatever they come up with!). Once everyone is ready to go on the adventure, children can take turns looking for sight words prompted by teacher. You may decide to sit up on your knees to “shake shake” the parachute gently while the treasure hunter crawls under the parachute and finds their word. It’s fun to clap and celebrate when the word has been found and the seeker is safely back outside the cave. If the wrong word is chosen, validate the word that was found and offer a second round (possibly with a friend) to find the right word. If anyone is scared of the “cave,” you can offer to look underneath for whatever scary thing they think might be in the cave before starting turns to make sure it’s safe. You may even find other kids want to join you by lifting up the parachute and looking under first.

**Leap Frog**

In this game, you can create an imaginary pond by placing “lily pads” (poly spots) on the floor that are close enough to each other kids can step or jump between them. You can also place sight words written on index cards or colorful paper interspersed between lily pads. Taking turns, children find the word and bring it out of the “pond,” saying the word aloud (to a cheering
audience!) when they are done. If a child falls off the lily pad, simply ask them to get back on and hop around! Words can be teacher or child-selected. Children may even guide the teacher to find a word by directing them.
Cool-Down Activities

FLOWER AND BUBBLE WAND BREATHING

While sitting in a circle, the children are instructed to pick an imaginary flower from the ground and hold it on one hand. They are also asked to pick up a bubble wand—that they might blow soap bubbles with—with their other hand. They are guided to smell the flower in their hand as they breathe in deeply through their noses and then blow out bubbles through the wand as they breathe out slowly and deeply through their mouths. Repeat this breath several times until the children’s breathing has slowed and their bodies are more relaxed.

BIRD BREATHING

While the children are either sitting or standing, with enough between them that they can raise their arms to the side without bumping others, they are invited to imagine they are birds with beautiful, strong wings. Starting with hands down by their sides, they are guided to breathe in deeply as they raise their arms above their heads, and then slowly breathe out as they swoop their wings down to their sides (or to the ground if they are seated). Arms rise again as they inhale and arms push down through the air at their sides as they exhale. Repeat 3-4 times until the children are breathing more calmly and regularly.

BALLOON BREATHING (DERIVED FROM BECKY BAILEY’S CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE)

Children are asked to place both hands on top of their heads and as they breathe in, to raise their hands in the shape of a filled balloon above their heads. As they breathe out, they push their hands down toward their heads as if they are emptying the balloon. Repeat this movement and breath several times.

ELEPHANT BREATHING

The children stand with their feet wide apart. Tell them that they are now big, strong elephants. Holding their hands together with their arms dangling straight down in front of their body like an imaginary elephant trunk, inhale through the nose as they raise their arms/trunk high up over their head expanding their chest. Then exhale out the mouth while swinging the arms/trunk down and through the legs. Arms rise again on the inhale and on the exhale swing down and through. Repeat 3-4 times.

BUTTERFLY BREATHING

While sitting in a circle, the children are instructed to place both of their hands in front of their faces, palms facing and as close as they can be, without actually touching palms together. They are guided to breath in deeply through their noses and then breath out deeply through their mouths. During the in breath children are instructed to open their arms wide to their sides like butterfly wings and during the out breath, children are instructed to gradually bring their hands close together but not touching.
**FAUCET BREATHING** (From Becky Bailey’s Conscious Discipline)

Children are invited to extend arms out in front of them and pretending their arms are faucets. They are instructed to tighten arm, shoulder, and face muscles and hold them tightly for a moment. Children are asked to exhale slowly making a “ssssshhh” sound and release all their muscles, draining out the stress.

**BIRTHDAY CANDLE BREATHING**

Children are invited to hold up one hand with all five fingers extended, pretending their fingers are Birthday candles. Everyone takes a deep breath in, and slowly exhales to blow out one of the candles. They put down each finger as it “goes out.” Five deep breaths in and five slow blowing exhales will result with all five candles out!

**LION BREATHING**

Children are invited to hold up both hands by the sides of their face with all five fingers spread and curled like lion paws. You can decide whether you’re doing LOUD lion breathing, quiet lion breathing, or something in between. Then, everyone takes a deep breath in, and roars like a lion as they exhale and make lion faces. Repeat this 3-4 times. It’s fun to know that even if you roar very quietly, it’s still a strong and powerful feeling to roar like a

**HUG BREATHING**

This is a fun way to breathe when you have a good amount of space for kids to spread out and extend their arms without bumping each other! Children are invited to hold their arms out to their sides and take a deep breath in. As they slowly exhale, they bring their arms to the front and wrap their arms around their body to give themselves a big hug. As they breathe in, they open their arms wide to the sides and then exhale again to give themselves a hug. You can repeat as many times as you like to calm and soothe your kids.

**SHARING WATER & SNACK**

While sitting in a circle, the adult pours a cup of water (or juice) and hands it to the child sitting right next to her/him. The adult then asks the children to pass the cup around the circle until it reaches the last child in the circle. This continues until everybody has a drink. You can do the same thing with a snack. You might be surprised at how calming, empowering, and unifying it is for children to simple sit in a circle and share a drink and/or a snack. The children are invited to make toasts to celebrate anything they choose to celebrate.

**HIGH-LOW**

This is an opportunity for the children to give feedback about their experience (during an activity, the whole day, or a specific play group). They are invited to share what they enjoyed most and what, if anything, they enjoyed least. All children should be given the opportunity to share. This is a good time for the adults to share something positive they noticed about each child’s participation in the activity, day, or play group.
SHOUT-OUTS

This is somewhat similar to High–Low. Children are given the opportunity to share something that someone did during the group that they appreciated. Each child is given a chance to give a shout-out to someone in the group. Some children may want to shout-out themselves, which is fine. At the end of the activity, the adults may want to give each child a shout-out, which will ensure that all the children are recognized.

GREAT BIG TEAMWORK CHEER

The group is asked to form a circle and join hands (think football huddle). The teacher invites the group to look around the circle – making eye contact with everyone on the team. It is a time to notice and celebrate the friendship of the group. Together, the group counts to three – and on “three” – they lift their hands in the air and shout “TEAMWORK.” They then bring their hands down again, count to three and shout “TEAMWORK!” again. Three or four times in a row usually does the trick.
Interested in reading more about the publications specifically mentioned in the manual?


Other references that have helped educate us:


LIFE CAN HURT.
PLAY CAN HEAL.

www.ligplaymakers.org