

most teacher directed preschool programs stress

most teacher directed preschool programs stress structured learning environments where educators guide children through specific activities and lessons. These programs emphasize teacher-led instruction to build foundational skills, social development, and academic readiness. Understanding the reasons behind this approach, its benefits, and potential drawbacks can help parents and educators make informed decisions about early childhood education. This article explores the characteristics of teacher-directed preschool programs, the educational philosophies supporting this model, and how these programs impact children's learning and development. Additionally, it discusses alternative approaches and considerations for balancing direct instruction with child-led exploration. The following sections provide a comprehensive overview of the most teacher directed preschool programs stress and related educational practices.

- Understanding Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs
- Educational Objectives of Teacher-Directed Approaches
- Benefits of Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs
- Challenges and Criticisms
- Balancing Teacher Direction with Child-Led Learning

Understanding Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs

Teacher-directed preschool programs are characterized by a curriculum and daily schedule primarily controlled by the educator. In these settings, teachers plan activities, deliver instructions, and guide children through specific learning goals. This contrasts with child-centered or play-based programs where children have more autonomy to explore and direct their own learning experiences. The structure in teacher-directed settings often involves group instruction, repetitive skill practice, and clear behavioral expectations.

Definition and Key Features

Most teacher directed preschool programs stress a clear hierarchy in the classroom where the teacher serves as the primary authority figure. Lessons

are designed to teach academic concepts such as literacy, numeracy, and basic science, alongside social skills like following directions and cooperating with peers. The classroom environment is typically organized to minimize distractions and maximize focus on the tasks at hand. This approach often utilizes worksheets, circle time discussions, and teacher-led storytime to reinforce learning objectives.

Historical and Theoretical Background

The teacher-directed approach has roots in traditional educational theories that emphasize structured pedagogy and direct instruction. Influential models, such as behaviorism and the foundational work of early childhood educators like Maria Montessori (in some interpretations), support the idea that clear guidance from adults helps children acquire essential skills. This approach is often favored in settings aiming to prepare children for the expectations of formal schooling.

Educational Objectives of Teacher-Directed Approaches

The primary goals of most teacher directed preschool programs stress the development of foundational academic and social skills. These objectives are carefully mapped out in the curriculum to ensure children meet developmental milestones and are ready for kindergarten and beyond.

Academic Skill Development

Teacher-directed programs prioritize early literacy and numeracy skills through systematic instruction. Activities may include letter recognition, phonemic awareness, counting, and basic problem-solving exercises. These programs aim to build a strong academic base that supports future learning success in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Social and Behavioral Goals

In addition to academics, teacher-directed preschools emphasize socialization skills such as listening, sharing, following rules, and working cooperatively. Teachers model appropriate behavior and use structured routines to help children develop self-regulation and interpersonal skills. These competencies are essential for adapting to group learning environments in elementary school.

Benefits of Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs

There are several advantages associated with most teacher directed preschool programs stress. These benefits contribute to their widespread adoption in various educational settings.

Consistency and Routine

The structured nature of teacher-directed programs provides children with predictable routines that foster a sense of security and stability. This consistency helps children understand expectations and reduces anxiety, which can positively influence learning engagement.

Targeted Skill Acquisition

By focusing on specific learning outcomes, teacher-directed programs can efficiently develop key academic and social skills. This targeted instruction often leads to measurable progress in early literacy and numeracy, preparing children for the demands of formal education.

Classroom Management and Order

Teacher-led classrooms typically experience fewer behavioral disruptions due to clear rules and adult supervision. This orderly environment allows children to concentrate on learning tasks and enables teachers to address individual needs effectively.

Preparation for Formal Schooling

Most teacher directed preschool programs stress the importance of acclimating children to the structured environment of elementary school. By experiencing teacher-led instruction early, children become familiar with classroom routines, attentiveness, and task completion requirements, which can ease the transition to kindergarten.

Challenges and Criticisms

Despite the benefits, there are criticisms and challenges associated with the teacher-directed model that are important to consider. These issues often center around the balance between instruction and play, as well as the impact on children's creativity and autonomy.

Limited Child Autonomy

One criticism is that most teacher directed preschool programs stress may reduce opportunities for children to make choices and explore their interests independently. This limitation can potentially hinder the development of creativity, problem-solving skills, and intrinsic motivation to learn.

Reduced Play-Based Learning

Play is widely recognized as a critical component of early childhood development. Critics argue that overly structured, teacher-directed approaches may minimize playtime, which can affect social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Play encourages imagination, social interaction, and flexible thinking that are not always emphasized in direct instruction.

One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Teacher-directed programs may struggle to accommodate diverse learning styles and developmental paces. Children who require more individualized attention or alternative teaching methods might find the rigid structure challenging, potentially impacting their engagement and progress.

Balancing Teacher Direction with Child-Led Learning

Recognizing the strengths and limitations of most teacher directed preschool programs stress, many educators advocate for a balanced approach that integrates direct instruction with child-centered activities.

Integrative Educational Models

Some preschools implement hybrid models combining structured lessons with opportunities for exploratory play. These programs maintain academic rigor while promoting creativity, social interaction, and self-expression.

Strategies for Effective Balance

Educators can adopt strategies such as:

- Designing teacher-led activities that incorporate choice and creativity
- Allocating specific times for free play and guided discovery
- Using observation to tailor instruction to individual child needs

- Encouraging collaborative learning experiences that blend structure and flexibility

Role of Educators and Parents

Both teachers and parents play essential roles in supporting a balanced preschool experience. Clear communication and shared expectations help ensure that children receive consistent messages about learning priorities while enjoying diverse developmental opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are most teacher-directed preschool programs' main areas of stress?

Most teacher-directed preschool programs emphasize academic skills, classroom management, and adhering to structured schedules, which can create stress for both teachers and students.

Why do teacher-directed preschool programs stress academic readiness?

They stress academic readiness to prepare children for the demands of elementary school, focusing on early literacy, numeracy, and following instructions, which helps build foundational skills.

How does teacher-directed instruction affect children's social development in preschool?

Teacher-directed instruction can limit opportunities for child-led play and social interaction, potentially impacting the development of social skills such as cooperation and problem-solving.

What challenges do teachers face in teacher-directed preschool programs?

Teachers often face challenges like balancing curriculum demands, managing diverse learning needs, maintaining classroom discipline, and meeting standardized benchmarks, all of which contribute to stress.

How does the emphasis on testing in teacher-directed

preschools impact children?

The emphasis on testing can lead to increased pressure on young children, reducing time for creative play and exploration, which are crucial for holistic development.

Are there benefits to the structured approach of teacher-directed preschool programs?

Yes, the structured approach offers clear routines and expectations, which can help children develop self-discipline, focus, and early academic skills needed for later schooling.

Additional Resources

1. The Tyranny of Structure: How Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs Affect Child Development

This book explores the negative impacts of overly structured, teacher-directed preschool programs on young children's natural curiosity and creativity. It delves into how rigid schedules and strict behavioral expectations can increase stress levels in both children and educators. The author advocates for more child-centered, play-based approaches that foster emotional well-being and holistic development.

2. Stress in the Early Years: Understanding Teacher-Directed Preschool Challenges

Focusing on the sources of stress within teacher-led preschool environments, this book presents research and case studies highlighting the pressures faced by teachers and students alike. It examines how high expectations, standardized curricula, and limited autonomy contribute to anxiety and burnout. Practical strategies for reducing stress and promoting a healthier classroom atmosphere are also discussed.

3. Balancing Control and Care: Rethinking Teacher-Directed Preschool Education

This title investigates the delicate balance between maintaining classroom control and nurturing young learners in teacher-directed preschools. It underscores the consequences of excessive teacher control on children's emotional and social development. The author suggests alternative methodologies that emphasize empathy, flexibility, and child agency to alleviate stress.

4. When Structure Stifles: The Emotional Toll of Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs

Examining the emotional impact on children, this book highlights how strict teacher-led programs can hinder self-expression and increase feelings of frustration and anxiety. It provides insights into how children cope with pressure and the long-term effects on their mental health. Recommendations for creating more supportive and responsive learning environments are

offered.

5. Teacher Burnout in Preschool: The Hidden Cost of Directed Learning Models

This book sheds light on the high levels of stress and burnout experienced by preschool teachers operating within heavily teacher-directed programs. It explores the root causes, such as lack of autonomy, high demands, and insufficient support. Strategies for improving teacher well-being and job satisfaction through program redesign are presented.

6. Play vs. Pressure: The Impact of Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs on Child Stress

Contrasting play-based and teacher-directed approaches, this book discusses how pressure-filled environments can undermine children's natural learning instincts. It reviews evidence showing that play fosters resilience and reduces stress, while rigid teacher-led instruction can do the opposite. The author advocates for integrating more play into early childhood education to promote healthier outcomes.

7. Understanding Stress Responses in Teacher-Directed Preschool Settings

This scientific yet accessible book explains how young children physiologically and psychologically respond to stress in highly controlled preschool classrooms. It analyzes cortisol levels, behavioral indicators, and emotional reactions linked to teacher-directed activities. The book also suggests intervention techniques to create calmer and more nurturing environments.

8. From Directive to Responsive: Transforming Preschool Programs to Reduce Stress

Offering a roadmap for educators and administrators, this book guides the transition from rigid teacher-led models to more responsive, child-focused programs. It highlights the benefits of flexibility, individualized learning, and teacher-child collaboration in reducing stress. Case studies demonstrate successful program transformations and their positive effects on all participants.

9. The Pressure to Perform: Academic Expectations and Stress in Teacher-Directed Preschools

This book critically examines how early academic demands in teacher-directed preschools contribute to stress among children and teachers. It discusses the societal and institutional pressures that drive these expectations and their implications for young learners' joy and motivation. The author proposes balanced approaches that prioritize developmental appropriateness over early academic achievement.

Most Teacher Directed Preschool Programs Stress

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Most Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs Stress: Understanding the Impact and Finding Solutions

Introduction:

Are you a preschool teacher feeling overwhelmed? Do you see the stress impacting your colleagues and the learning environment? The pressure to meet curriculum demands, manage challenging behaviors, and maintain a stimulating classroom within a highly structured teacher-directed preschool program can be immense. This article delves into the realities of stress within teacher-directed preschool settings, exploring its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. We'll examine the specific pressures faced by educators, the impact on children and families, and offer practical strategies for creating a more supportive and sustainable environment. This comprehensive guide will equip you with the knowledge and tools to navigate the challenges and foster a happier, healthier preschool experience for everyone involved.

1. The Pressures of a Teacher-Directed Preschool Environment:

Teacher-directed preschools, by their nature, place significant emphasis on structured learning activities led by the teacher. While this approach can offer benefits in terms of skill development and consistency, it also creates specific pressures:

Rigorous Curriculum Demands: Many teacher-directed programs adhere to strict curriculum guidelines, leaving little room for spontaneity or adapting to individual learning styles. This pressure to "cover" all the material can lead to rushed lessons, increased workload, and feelings of inadequacy if targets aren't met.

Behavior Management Challenges: Managing a classroom of young children, particularly in a highly structured environment, requires significant energy and skill. Dealing with challenging behaviors, tantrums, and individual needs can be emotionally draining and contribute to teacher burnout.

High Expectations & Accountability: The emphasis on measurable outcomes and standardized assessments adds pressure to demonstrate progress and meet external expectations. This constant evaluation can heighten stress levels and impact teacher morale.

Limited Autonomy and Creativity: The rigidity of a teacher-directed approach can stifle teacher creativity and limit opportunities for individualized instruction. This lack of autonomy can lead to feelings of frustration and decreased job satisfaction.

Administrative Burden: Beyond teaching, preschool teachers often shoulder significant

administrative tasks, including paperwork, parent communication, and curriculum planning. This added workload intensifies pressure and reduces time for direct interaction with children.

2. The Ripple Effect: Impact on Children, Families, and the Preschool System:

The stress experienced by preschool teachers doesn't remain isolated; it has a ripple effect across the entire preschool ecosystem:

Impact on Children: Stressed teachers may inadvertently project their negativity onto children, leading to less engaging interactions and a less nurturing learning environment. This can negatively impact children's emotional development and learning outcomes.

Impact on Families: A stressed teacher may struggle to communicate effectively with parents, leading to misunderstandings and strained relationships. Parents may also notice the impact of teacher stress on their children's behavior and emotional well-being.

Impact on the Preschool System: High teacher turnover due to burnout is a significant problem for preschools. This constant cycle of hiring and training new staff disrupts the stability and consistency of the learning environment, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided.

3. Strategies for Reducing Stress in Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs:

Addressing the issue of teacher stress requires a multi-faceted approach:

Promoting Collaboration and Support: Creating a supportive team environment where teachers can share ideas, resources, and emotional support is crucial. Regular team meetings, peer mentoring, and opportunities for professional development can foster a sense of community and reduce feelings of isolation.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Incorporating elements of flexibility into the curriculum allows teachers to adjust their approach based on children's individual needs and interests. This can reduce pressure to rigidly adhere to a prescribed plan.

Mindfulness and Self-Care: Encouraging teachers to prioritize self-care practices, such as mindfulness exercises, yoga, or spending time in nature, can help them manage stress levels and improve their overall well-being. Providing access to resources and support for mental health is equally vital.

Improved Communication and Parent Involvement: Open and honest communication with parents is essential. Involving parents in the learning process can create a shared sense of responsibility and reduce the burden on teachers.

Administrative Support: Reducing administrative burden on teachers through streamlining paperwork, providing adequate support staff, and creating efficient communication systems is crucial.

Advocacy for Better Resources: Preschools need adequate funding to provide resources for teacher support, professional development, and classroom materials. Advocating for increased funding and improved working conditions is vital.

4. Rethinking the Teacher-Directed Approach:

While teacher-directed methods can be effective, it's essential to consider integrating child-centered approaches to alleviate pressure and enhance the learning experience. Balancing direct instruction with opportunities for child-led exploration and play can create a more engaging and less stressful learning environment.

Article Outline: "Navigating Stress in Teacher-Directed Preschools"

Introduction: Defining the problem and outlining the article's scope.

Chapter 1: The Sources of Stress: Detailed exploration of pressures faced by teachers.

Chapter 2: Consequences of Teacher Stress: Impact on children, families, and the system.

Chapter 3: Practical Strategies for Stress Reduction: Solutions and actionable steps.

Chapter 4: Re-evaluating the Teacher-Directed Model: A call for balance and integration of child-centered approaches.

Conclusion: Summary of key points and a call to action.

(Detailed explanation of each chapter would follow here, expanding on the points already mentioned. This would comprise the bulk of the 1500+ word article.)

9 Unique FAQs:

1. What are the most common signs of teacher burnout in preschool settings?
2. How can parents support teachers struggling with stress?
3. Are there specific curriculum adjustments that can reduce teacher workload?
4. What role does administrative support play in mitigating teacher stress?
5. How can preschools foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support among teachers?
6. What are some effective mindfulness techniques for preschool teachers?
7. How can teacher-directed preschools incorporate child-led learning effectively?
8. What are the long-term consequences of high teacher turnover in preschools?
9. Where can preschool teachers find resources and support for mental health?

9 Related Articles:

1. The Impact of High-Stakes Testing on Preschool Teachers: Explores the pressure of standardized assessments on early childhood educators.
2. Building Resilience in Early Childhood Educators: Focuses on strategies for developing coping mechanisms for stress.
3. The Importance of Teacher Well-being in Early Childhood Education: Highlights the connection between teacher well-being and child outcomes.
4. Creating a Supportive Preschool Culture: Discusses strategies for building a positive and collaborative work environment.
5. Effective Behavior Management Techniques for Preschoolers: Offers practical strategies for managing challenging behaviors in the classroom.
6. The Benefits of Play-Based Learning in Preschool: Advocates for integrating child-led play into the curriculum.
7. Parent-Teacher Communication: Building Strong Partnerships: Explores effective communication

strategies to foster positive relationships.

8. Addressing Teacher Burnout Through Professional Development: Highlights the role of training in equipping teachers with coping skills.

9. The Role of Administrative Support in Reducing Teacher Stress: Focuses on the vital role of administrative staff in supporting teachers.

Most Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs Stress: Understanding the Impact and Seeking Solutions

Introduction:

Are you a concerned parent noticing signs of stress in your preschooler after a long day of learning? Or perhaps you're a preschool teacher feeling the weight of a highly structured curriculum? The increasing prevalence of teacher-directed preschool programs has sparked a crucial conversation: are these programs inadvertently causing undue stress for both children and educators? This in-depth article delves into the potential stressors associated with teacher-directed preschool environments, explores their impact on young children's development, and offers practical strategies for mitigation. We will examine the benefits and drawbacks of this approach, discuss alternative models, and provide resources to help you navigate this critical issue.

1. The Rise of Teacher-Directed Preschools and the Pressure to Perform:

The current educational landscape often emphasizes early academic achievement. This pressure translates into preschool programs heavily focused on teacher-led instruction, structured activities, and standardized assessments. While these programs aim to prepare children for kindergarten, the rigorous nature can lead to excessive pressure, especially for children who thrive in less structured environments. This focus often prioritizes rote learning and academic skills over social-emotional development and play-based learning, which are crucial at this age. The intense focus on meeting curriculum targets can create a stressful environment for both children and teachers. Teachers often feel pressured to cover a vast amount of material in a limited time, leading to burnout and impacting the quality of their interactions with children.

2. Identifying Stressors in Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs:

Several factors contribute to stress within teacher-directed preschool programs:

Rigid Schedules and Limited Choice: The lack of autonomy and choice in activities can be stressful for young children who are still developing their self-regulation skills. Constantly being told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it can stifle their natural curiosity and lead to frustration and anxiety.

Emphasis on Competition and Performance: The pressure to perform well on assessments or keep up with peers can create a competitive atmosphere that is counterproductive to a child's healthy development. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, particularly for children who are not yet developmentally ready for formal academic instruction.

Limited Opportunities for Free Play: Free play is essential for children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. However, in heavily teacher-directed programs, free play time is often minimized, leading to a lack of opportunities for children to explore their interests, develop problem-solving skills, and regulate their emotions independently.

High Teacher-to-Student Ratios: Large class sizes and insufficient teacher support can make it challenging for teachers to provide individualized attention and support to each child, increasing stress levels for both teachers and students. This can lead to children feeling overlooked and teachers feeling overwhelmed.

Lack of Child-Centered Learning: A lack of emphasis on a child's individual learning style and interests can lead to frustration and disengagement. Children learn best when they are actively involved and engaged in activities that are relevant to their interests and developmental stage.

3. The Impact of Stress on Young Children's Development:

Chronic stress in young children can have significant negative consequences on their social, emotional, and cognitive development. These can include:

Behavioral Problems: Increased aggression, withdrawal, anxiety, and defiance.

Sleep Disturbances: Difficulty falling asleep, frequent waking, and nightmares.

Physical Symptoms: Headaches, stomach aches, and loss of appetite.

Emotional Regulation Difficulties: Challenges managing emotions, leading to outbursts and meltdowns.

Cognitive Impairment: Difficulties with concentration, memory, and learning.

4. Strategies for Mitigating Stress in Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs:

While a complete shift away from teacher-directed methods might not always be feasible, there are ways to reduce stress and improve the learning experience:

Incorporating Play-Based Learning: Integrating more opportunities for free play, imaginative play, and hands-on activities.

Providing Choices and Autonomy: Offering children choices within the learning activities, allowing them some control over their learning experience.

Focusing on Social-Emotional Learning: Prioritizing activities that promote emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and social skills.

Reducing Assessment Pressure: Minimizing formal assessments and focusing on observation and informal assessments.

Improving Teacher-Student Ratios: Advocating for smaller class sizes and increased teacher support.

Encouraging Collaboration and Communication: Fostering a collaborative environment between teachers, parents, and children.

Promoting Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques: Introducing simple mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques into the daily routine.

5. Alternative Preschool Models: A Balanced Approach

Exploring alternative preschool models, such as Reggio Emilia or Montessori approaches, which

emphasize child-led learning, play-based exploration, and individualized learning, can offer a less stressful and more engaging learning environment. These models often integrate teacher-directed activities but prioritize a child's natural curiosity and developmental needs.

Article Outline:

Title: Most Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs Stress: Understanding the Impact and Seeking Solutions

- I. Introduction: Hooking the reader and providing an overview.
- II. The Rise of Teacher-Directed Preschools and the Pressure to Perform: Examining the current educational trends and their impact.
- III. Identifying Stressors in Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs: Detailing specific stressors for children and teachers.
- IV. The Impact of Stress on Young Children's Development: Exploring the negative consequences of chronic stress.
- V. Strategies for Mitigating Stress in Teacher-Directed Preschool Programs: Offering practical solutions and strategies.
- VI. Alternative Preschool Models: A Balanced Approach: Exploring alternative models that prioritize child-led learning.
- VII. Conclusion: Summarizing key points and offering final thoughts.

(The body of this article has already fulfilled points I-VI of the outline.)

VII. Conclusion:

Teacher-directed preschool programs can offer valuable benefits, but it's crucial to acknowledge and address the potential for stress they can create. By understanding the contributing factors, implementing stress-reduction strategies, and exploring alternative models, we can strive to create preschool environments that nurture children's holistic development while fostering a positive and supportive learning experience for both children and teachers. The focus should always be on creating a balanced approach that prioritizes the well-being and individual needs of each child. Open communication between parents, teachers, and administrators is critical in navigating this complex issue.

FAQs:

- 1. What are the signs of stress in preschool children? Look for changes in behavior (aggression, withdrawal), sleep disturbances, physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches), emotional outbursts, and difficulty concentrating.
- 2. How much teacher-directed instruction is too much? There's no magic number; observe your child's response. Signs of stress indicate a need for balance with child-led activities.
- 3. Can play-based learning adequately prepare children for kindergarten? Yes, play-based learning fosters crucial skills like problem-solving, creativity, and social interaction, essential for kindergarten success.

4. What are the benefits of smaller class sizes in preschool? Smaller classes allow for individualized attention, reducing stress and improving learning outcomes for both children and teachers.
5. How can parents advocate for changes in their child's preschool? Communicate concerns with teachers and administrators, suggest alternative approaches, and consider joining parent-teacher organizations.
6. What role do parents play in mitigating preschool stress? Create a supportive and calm home environment, engage in positive communication with the preschool, and provide opportunities for play and relaxation.
7. Are all teacher-directed preschool programs equally stressful? No, the level of stress varies based on factors such as curriculum design, teacher practices, and class size.
8. What are the long-term consequences of chronic stress in early childhood? Chronic stress can impact academic performance, social-emotional development, and mental health in later years.
9. Where can I find more information on child development and stress management? Consult resources like the American Academy of Pediatrics, Zero to Three, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Related Articles:

1. The Importance of Play in Early Childhood Development: Explores the crucial role of play in various aspects of a child's development.
2. Recognizing and Addressing Stress in Young Children: Provides detailed information on identifying and managing stress in preschoolers.
3. The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education: Details the philosophy and practices of the Reggio Emilia approach.
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5. Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool: Building a Strong Foundation: Focuses on the importance of social-emotional learning and strategies for implementation.
6. Teacher Burnout in Early Childhood Education: Causes and Solutions: Addresses the issue of teacher burnout and provides strategies for prevention and mitigation.
7. Creating a Stress-Free Classroom Environment: Offers practical tips for creating a supportive and calming classroom atmosphere.
8. The Benefits of Mindfulness for Young Children: Explores the benefits of mindfulness practices for young children's emotional well-being.
9. Balancing Academic and Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool: Discusses the importance of integrating academic and social-emotional learning effectively.

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today's children Challenges common perceptions of children as simply "adults in training"

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ironically, science gives us more certainty than ever before that young children are exceptionally strong thinkers. In her pathbreaking book, Christakis explains what it's like to be a young child in America today, in a world designed by and for adults, where we have confused schooling with learning. She offers real-life solutions to real-life issues, with nuance and direction that takes us far beyond the usual prescriptions for fewer tests, more play. She looks at children's use of language, their artistic expressions, the way their imaginations grow, and how they build deep emotional bonds to stretch the boundaries of their small worlds. Rather than clutter their worlds with more and more stuff, sometimes the wisest course for us is to learn how to get out of their way. Christakis's message is energizing and reassuring: young children are inherently powerful, and they (and their parents) will flourish when we learn new ways of restoring the vital early learning environment to one that is best suited to the littlest learners. This bold and pragmatic challenge to the conventional wisdom peels back the mystery of childhood, revealing a place that's rich with possibility.

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