



PROPOSED IDEAS FOR EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES
OFFERED BY THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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Comprehensive Child Care
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In the following pages, I would like to outline what I believe would be a comprehensive package of support services that the Children's Museum could offer to Early Childhood programs, parents, teachers, etc., at the Wharf.

I. VISITOR CENTER

A. Exhibit Pieces

In the proposed new Visitor Center (exhibit area), there will be three major theme areas. "Me," "Meeting Ground" and "Man-Made World" (see descriptions in pamphlet "Do Touch." Issues concerned with human development will be focused in the "Me" area, and would thus include the three exhibits I am proposing.

1. Expansion of Grownups and Kids (see attached description).

2. "Child's Eye View" Exhibit

This exhibit would help children to experience various parts of every day life from the perspective of a two-or three year old. It might consist in part of an oversized environment, enlarged crib, and "Edith Ann" type of rocking chair.

In addition, there might be a slide show of objects and places taken from a 2 year olds perspective. This exhibit might be developed in conjunction with -

3. "Before You Were Three" Exhibit

Again, paritally through environment and activities we would like to help children begin to understand how they began to develop answering some of the questions - how you began to walk, talk, explore and have feelings. Robbie Harris, the author of the recently published book, bearing this same title, has shown an interest in developing such an exhibit in conjunction with us. Some initial tryouts of activities might happen in the fall, to help us begin thinking about what we would like to do.

A dual purpose of this exhibit would be to provide information about normal development to parents of young children also. During the past week, I have been talking with Barbara Powell, one of the developer's at E.D.C.'s Exploring Childhood Program. They are submitting a proposal to the Office of Child Development's Child Welfare Research and Demonstration Grants Program, for providing "Information for Parents with Very Young Children. As a participant in their proposed research project, I would be leading several parent groups, with the purpose of finding out from the parents what the important issues of development they were interested in knowing about felt it was important to

know about. Several other topics, about parenting skills will also be included as well as some workshops. My purposes for running the groups would be to begin finding out, what kinds of services parents would like to see the Museum offering particularly for them - workshops, seminars, home loan materials - discovery kits or toy lending library, day care, drop in care, vacation programs, etc. Some of the members of the group would have the opportunity to work on the development of the "Before You Were Three" while others might serve on an advisory board.

B. Programs

Pre-school Visitation Programs. In our present site pre-school visits are scheduled for one morning each month, with approximately 240 visiting. (see enclosures 4,5,6, and 8). In addition to our regular staff of interns, we are aided by 30 high school students from 6 Boston Public school, Child Development Programs. We have found the use of volunteers effective in being able to help groups individualize the visit for their children. In a larger site, we could see the possibility of expanding the program into a field service course for high school students - perhaps funded through the desegregations money available through Chapter 636. Students could possibly spend 2 full days at the Museum, working in the infant-toddler space, the proposed day care or with older school children. There would be lots of opportunities to observe a variety of children as well as types of programs as well as learning the issues about child development, etc. There would also be time given over to workshop, etc. (Note a student in our present program runs at the Roxbury High school, has come onto our intern staff this summer and is the assistant coordinator of our summer children's camp program.

II. RESOURCE CENTER

A. Exhibit Piece

I would like to develop an adult participatory exhibit about Montessori. Several years ago, the Museum acquired a partial set of the original (1890) Montessori materials in excellent condition. I would like to develop a three level exhibit, showing the original materials (we also have a catalog and an early edition of her handbook), compare them with their modern commercially produced counterparts and show ways they can be produced for home or center use. In addition to the exhibit, workshops would be set up to help adults to learn to make and use the materials. I have initially contacted and gotten a favorable response from Nienhuis Montessori, in California, to provide on permanent loan a set of contemporary materials to match our collection. I am hoping to meet with a representative of their company, later this summer to work out the details. This exhibit if successful, might lead to a series of exhibits based on predominating philosophies of early childhood.

B. Resources for Parents of Young Children

1. Toy Lending Library -

Perhaps as part of a family membership, or as a service for family day care providers, a toy lending library might be established. We would definitely need to look at the research to see with what success this idea has been implemented else where and by whom - its costs, maintenance, space, needs, etc. and how feasible it could be done by us.

2. Lending Library of Parenting Materials

Same issues involved here as above - we have also toyed with the issue of how our computer system, could also provide some information for parents - perhaps around what services (day care, recreation, education) are available in the area.

3. Workshops, Courses, etc.

In the past we have offered several one shot workshops for families such as Tot Stuff - activities for children under 3 - on the road, at home or in public places, and "Special Stuff" - family activities you can adapt to the needs of your special needs child. We would like to expand this program, so that it can happen on a regular basis.

C. Resources for Programs Serving Young Children

1. Loan and Discovery Kits

Presently all of our loan and kit materials are geared for elementary school aged children (see enclosure 7). We would like to develop a series of kits that could be used by teachers in centers, group homes, or classrooms that would relate to particular themes. Loan kits might consist of commercial materials gathered together to help teach - color (might include, colorgels, a color tray kit, beanbags, a picture set or puzzle). Materials a program with a small budget might not be able to afford but would like to have around when a particular theme is being emphasized. These materials would be seen as enrichment materials, not basic program materials. On the other hand, discovery kits would be developed so that they could be easily duplicated - water play kit, astronaut dress up kit, salt pendulum, or a portable geodesic dome kit.

2. Increased Resource Library for Early Childhood providers

3. Workshops, Courses and In-service Training

We have been providing all of these at various levels for parapro-

professionals as well as graduate students. For several years I have taught a "Creative Experiences" course for the Office for Children - bearing credit through Lesley's Continuing Education Programs. I would like to investigate the possibility of being subcontracted by a university to provide this course on a regular basis for both day care personnel and their students. I would like to set up a series of monthly workshops, applicable to early childhood programs. Some might be single topics (puppets) while others might be more broad based (drama for young children). These themes would be carried over to the "Grownups and Kids" activities to show continuity in related program areas.

If for example, the theme were Puppets, during the month there would be at least 2 public workshops, dealing with making and using puppets with or for children. Perhaps a professional would come in to do some direct programs with children either in the Resource Center or the Visitor Center. In the Visitor Center there could be a variety of activities going on - making and using puppets, building puppet theatres, using puppets from the Museum's collections, etc.

In-service workshops based on those monthly themes could also be offered to programs.

III. DAY CARE

Presently there are a lot of unsettled issues around providing day care services at the Wharf. Basically, if it gets into providing day care, the Museum would want to design a program with a sound enough economic base so that it could support itself. Since we would not be in a neighborhood and probably not serving welfare children, the issues of corporate day care have become a reality for us. I have personally been giving these issues some hard thoughts and have done some reading, primarily Margaret O'Brien Steinfeld's book, Who's Minding the Children, which looks at the history and politics of day care in America, and Ilse Mattich's article "Makeshift Won't Do" which looks at some of the issues of day care.

THINGS I'VE DONE AND FUTURE PLANS.

1. Basically the biggest issue I have to face is funding. I know very little about fund raising and proposal writing. a) I have spent some time reading through the latest edition of the Foundation Directory and read several articles at the end of the directory, namely, "What Makes A Good Proposal" by F. Lee Jacquette and Barbara L. Jacquette, and "What Will A Foundation Look For When You Submit a Grant Proposal" by Robert Mayer. b) I have obtained a description of all the federal agencies that make grants to children's programs, and will write for the guidelines, from those, under whose guidelines our programs might fit. c) I have set up an initial brainstorming session with the member of our development office, whose primary concern will be to help find

funding for "Me" related projects.

2. I have begun to collect some data around the impact of use of the Museum by young children and providers, etc. (see enclosures 9 and 10) to find out - yearly attendance rates of under threes, percentage of recycle members who are primarily E.C.E related programs, percentage of resource center tours given to E.C.E. people (students, teachers, parents, etc.)

THINGS TO BE DONE NEXT

1. Read some more literature about funding - look at E.D.C.'s proposal to O.C.D as one type of model - (see enclosure 11).
2. Get back in touch with Pam Coughlin (O.C.D.) about possibility of developing materials for Headstart - loan kits or discovery boxes.
3. Develop questionnaires for parents of infants and toddlers and general parent groups.
4. Devise a way for the admissions desk and library to begin to keep statistics about use by people dealing with young children, as well as accurate visitor count.
5. Look more closely at literature and evaluation of industry based and corporate day care.
6. Develop some coherent abstracts of the various components of the package.
7. Begin to look at a comprehensive day care program - once the negotiations have been completed.



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROJECT

In 1981, The Boston Children's Museum embarked upon **The Early Childhood Project**, a unique, three year project to develop and try out new models for family support in a museum setting. Supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the **Early Childhood Project** has produced environments, programs and materials within the museum to promote a positive setting and climate for parents and young children to play, share and learn from one another. An exhibit area,

PLAYSPACE, designed for children under five where the focus and action is play, coupled with resource areas for adults providing a broad range of parenting information and materials, comprises this natural gathering place that is comfortable yet stimulating — a place where families can relax, enjoy themselves and learn. Staff provide the invaluable link between exhibit, resources and visitors, with training that emphasizes the fact that informal interaction need not be impersonal. Young families, preschools, daycare groups and special needs children have fun in **PLAYSPACE**, and they come back repeatedly. **The Early Childhood Project** has demonstrated successful new models for providing support to this growing population, models that are replicable in many of the natural, self selected settings they frequent, such as hospitals, shopping malls, libraries and transportation terminals. By the addition of simple structures and informal programs, we believe these natural gathering places could become settings which promote opportunities to share information, play, socialize and receive reassurance — opportunities so often missing in our communities, yet needed by every family.



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROJECT



Parent/Child Workshop



Where does The Early Childhood Project happen?

- in the **PLAYSPACE** exhibit, a large, enclosed space often likened to an indoor park, filled with play structures and toys designed for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. For parents and other adults, there is comfortable seating and a variety of resource boards with information about child development, child care and family services. Adjoining **PLAYSPACE** is the **PARENT RESOURCE ROOM**, with both a permanent and lending collection of books, toys, activity kits and materials for parents to explore while relaxing with a cup of coffee.



Parent Resource Room

Design: Dorothea Sierra
Photographs: Richard Howard



Parent Consultant Volunteer

Who staffs the project?

- museum professionals, including early childhood specialists, parent volunteers, college students and teenagers, who receive special training in developmental and social issues facing parents with an emphasis on making all visitors feel welcome.

What about the programs?

- daily, drop-in activities for parents and children on **PLAYSPACE**.
- workshop series — some drop-in, others by advance reservation — including parent/child activities and parent discussion groups.
- preschool and daycare teacher training seminars.
- Toddler Take Over — special events for our audience every April.
- Outreach programming, by arrangement with the ECP staff, has included babysitting training with teenagers, training for family daycare providers, introductory tours for parent groups and early intervention programs. Any non-profit organization may visit free of charge with advance reservations.

What kinds of materials have been developed?

- 26 individual activity kits; **KITS FOR KIDS** containing low-cost, reproducible activities parents can replicate at home.
- a comprehensive training kit; **PLAYSPACE AT HOME** for parents or preschool educators, with materials and supplies for 66 activities.

Playspace At Home Kit



What's ahead?

- a soon-to-be published workbook for other sites or institutions interested in creating similar play spaces and programs.
- a national conference: **PLAYSPACES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN** coming up in 1984.

What if I . . .

- am interested in replication or want more information? Call Jeri Robinson, Program Director — (617) 426-6500 X227 or write to the address below.
- want to rent a kit? Call the KITS Dept. (617) 426-6500 X231.
- would like to bring a group? Call RESERVATIONS, (617) 426-6500 X221.

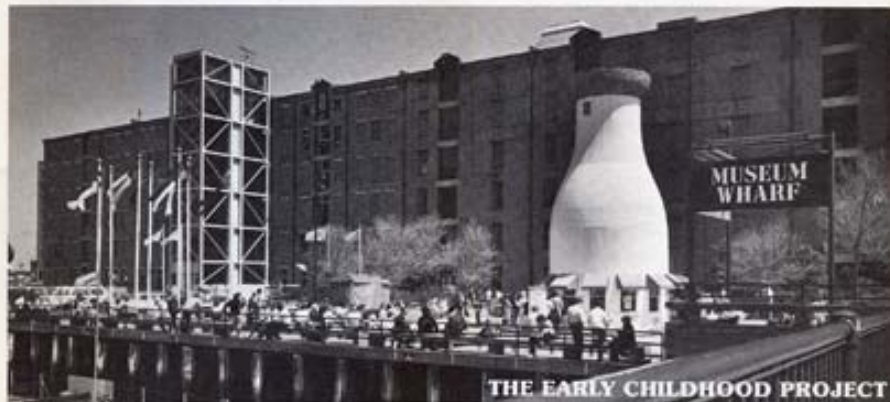
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