

lum celebrates children's differences and supports their various intelligences. For example, the author uses intelligences such as linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential as a base of support to create differentiated instruction. Classroom construction—spacing, materials, displays, and time—helps give the room a voice. When creating a classroom where play centers can thrive, one should also take into account time, predictable routines, whole-class lessons, choices, clean-up time, and reflection.

Part 2 depicts six detailed and deconstructed centers. The block, the math and art center, the reading nook, and the dramatic play center incorporate the setup, launch, development, and enrichment of each area. The science center combines establishment guidelines with an introduction using developmentally appropriate plans and supplies, always urging teachers to pay attention to student questions and enhancement. The section also examines teacher interventions for each listed center, providing examples of teacher observations and possible responses for students. These teacher interventions include ways to encourage children to expand their exploration.

Dinnerstein suggests that to move forward, play centers need to engage children and provoke their thinking constantly. Children need to maintain interest, remain stimulated, and embrace life-long learning. Play-based inquiry achieved through investigation, curriculum connection, probing, and research plays a monumental role in children's growth. And she concludes that we need to con-

sider the individual needs of the child and cultivate a student-centric learning environment.

Throughout *Choice Time*, Dinnerstein supports the idea that children need to make choices to become more self-directed and more independent free thinkers. Her approach is widely accessible to teachers, parents, and the broader community.

I much welcome this easy-to-understand, insightful book, based on principles—a refreshing resource for all those interested in children and play. Dinnerstein delivers a solid, informative rationale for fostering a discovery-based curriculum, its benefits, and its pathways for success in early-childhood education. Her model creates a marvelous framework and vision for deepened educational learning with a masterful blueprint for children's learning and advancement.

—Kristie Lynch, *Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY*

**Creative Block Play:
A Comprehensive Guide to
Learning through Building**

Rosanne Regan Hansel

St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2017.

Foreword, acknowledgments, introduction, references, and index. 158 pp. \$39.95 paper. ISBN: 9781605544458

The imaginative, exploratory play inspired by blocks uniquely contributes to children's development in every domain—social, emotional, cognitive, and physical. Their matchless versatility has made blocks a

mainstay in early-childhood settings for over one hundred years. *Creative Block Play* firmly positions the time-honored tradition of playing with blocks as an essential component of today's curriculum for young children. Drawing on a wealth of personal experience, Hansel introduces readers to the endless possibilities of learning through building and playing with blocks.

This all-inclusive manual to learning through building addresses how children's free and spontaneous block play can foster such twenty-first-century skills as initiative, persistence, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration while also encouraging creativity and aesthetic awareness. Hansel shows how block play can be a channel for reinforcing language and literacy development by feeding the impetus to communicate. She explains that children have ample opportunity to develop sophisticated language and subject-specific vocabulary while talking, drawing, and writing during block play. She also notes the significant development of visual-spatial abilities that result when children visually represent their three-dimensional structures. Hansel further explores block play as a means of integrating science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics—a network of connections commonly known as STEAM.

The easy-to-read text and inviting images clearly show how to prepare indoor and outdoor environments conducive for meaningful interactions with blocks, select unexpected building materials, and non-traditional accessories, and use family and community resources to extend the possibilities of construction-centered learn-

ing. Numerous photographs document children's inventive play with blocks as well as illustrate the importance of adults observing, responding to, and validating children's efforts and accomplishments during block play.

The chapter about children's deep engagement with blocks through long-term studies, projects, and investigations suggests the influence of Reggio Emilia on the author. The visual examples and enlightening narratives contributed by teachers working in a variety of programs for young children emphasize the importance of offering opportunities for rich, complex play with blocks. When teachers balance planned provocations designed to spark a child's imaginative thinking with improvised responses to individual building interests, adults and children together create block-centered projects full of unexpected events and unforeseen opportunities to cultivate the power of play.

Hansel's ideas are both informative and inspiring, making the book an invaluable resource for any adult wanting to expand the learning inherent in block play. The helpful lists and revealing quotes reinforce the practical nature of this comprehensive guide to block play in the lives of children. Margie Carter, co-author of *Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments*, aptly describes *Creative Block Play* as a "call to action" (p. xv). If Hansel's goal was to challenge her readers to reimagine their role in supporting and extending children's multifaceted learning through play with blocks, she has hit her mark.

—Rebecca McMahan Giles, *University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL*