

# newsworthy trends

## All Work And No Play?

by Beverly Willett

(NAPSA)—Finding the time to play may no longer be child's play for today's kids.

According to the newsletter, *Viewpoints on Parenting*, play appears to occupy less and less of children's time. While parents are "dressing down" on casual Fridays, children are leading more structured lives with less time for play.

Parents and schools today often expect children to achieve more at increasingly earlier stages of their lives. Even kindergarten is no longer the haven of nap time and finger painting it once was. More and more school districts offer full-time kindergarten programs, teach skills once reserved for first grade, administer tests and have academic, structured curriculums.

Even "playtime" or free time is not what it was. From an early age, the week for children is packed with numerous structured activities, with children going from lesson to game to tutor.

If downtime and family time seem scant or non-existent, parents should consider these strategies to achieve more balance in their child's life:

- Encourage and give your child permission to have free, unstructured time for spontaneous play and relaxation.

- Eliminate a structured activity from your child's schedule. Replace it with free time.

- It can be important to speak out about certain issues that affect the amount of free time your child may have. For example, there is a growing dialogue about the emphasis placed on standardized testing and a strong call from parents, schools and business leaders for school curriculums to place more importance on activities that encourage curiosity and



**Remember that your children are just that: children. Take steps now to ensure their lives are balanced, with plenty of time for play.**

critical thinking. Parents are also speaking out against homework overload. Some states have placed limits on the number of hours teens can work during the school year. Finally, some colleges are encouraging teens to take traditional summer jobs rather than cramming college courses into the summer.

- Know when it's time to put the homework pen down and send your child to bed.

- Try not to compare your child with others.

- Set a good example. Take time out for yourself and time to play with your children—let them know you value play.

- Encourage corporations who are teaching employees to play, to remind them about the value of play for their own children.

You can learn more parenting ideas and tips from *Viewpoints on Parenting*, a free newsletter available at Toys "R" Us, Kids "R" Us, Babies "R" Us and Imaginarium stores.

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