

## Playing Together How This Develops

By Nikki Grazier

During our recent parent: teacher meetings some parents asked about the children's friends and whether their children played with other children. I thought that I would take this opportunity to write about social play among children – and the general pattern of how this develops. The following is taking from an article about the ages and stages of play by Karen Miller:

**Solitary play** – the child plays alone, largely unaware of or unconcerned with other children in the environment, typical of infants and young toddlers.

**Parallel play** – Children are playing close to each other, doing generally the same type of thing, but not interacting with each other. Emerges with the toddlers year and often seen with two year olds.

**Associative play** – Children are playing close to each other, getting ideas from each other, and sometimes helping each other such as offering materials or offering ideas. Language helps – three years and older.

The following is another type of play:

Finally the child expands into "Cooperative Play" somewhere between the ages of four or five. Cooperative play takes place between two or more children as they grow and develop socially and emotionally. In cooperative play,



children exchange ideas about the game or the toy they are playing with at that moment in time. Rules tend to still be very loosely constructed, but children know who is playing which role in their game. Play may last only a few minutes or it may stretch out for longer periods of time. Gradually they learn to respect the property rights of others. This is a clue that they are gaining social skills; at this same time

“Young children learn from each other, imitating words and behaviours. They learn from their own experiences and from modeling parental behaviour. All these things are their “teachers”. Life is their teacher.”

Magda Gerber, Yourself-Confident Baby pg192.

they begin to understand that they need permission to play with certain materials and certain people. They are also more willing to share their toys for the sake of the game. Communication about the play is the critical point of cooperative play.

Article Source:  
<http://EzineArticles.com/900253>

## Play in the Mamaku Room

Interestingly enough I have observed that some children do enter these stages earlier than as suggested by the above articles. I wonder if it has to do with their experience of respectful relationships with their peers as guided by parents and teachers who follow a RIE and/or Pikler approach.

Therefore in the Mamaku room we have children who at times prefer to be playing solitarily, or engage in paral-



lel play. However, the older children in the room also engage in associative play with their peers as the photos of the hairdressing play they were engaging in recently demonstrates. As with much of the play in our room this was solely thought of and organised by the children themselves.

Since teaching in the Mamaku room, after twenty years in the early childhood sector, I have found that amongst all the two year olds that I have ever worked with, the Mamakus as a group are the most able to work with and alongside each other with very few disputes. If a dispute arises they often settle it themselves or ask a teacher to help. There is very little of the hurting behaviour that I have seen amongst other children of this age. On reflection I can only put this down to the strong RIE and Pikler philosophy underlying the practices at TLC especially in the infant and toddlers rooms, and also the fact that the children in their small group know each other well and are not ‘stressed’ by being in a large group of up to fifty children as in some centres.



Joseph Chilton Pearce

Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold.”