Are we losing the art of play?

New online resource provides ideas for learning through play

PERTH, WA August 12,2011 PARENTS are continually given the guilt message to limit theirchilds TV viewing, but are coming up blank when it comes to alternatives,according to Perth early childhood educator and successful blogger ChristieBurnett. This was part of the idea behind the launch of her new online resourcePlayopedia, which brings together play ideas in varying categories for babiesthrough to early primary aged children.

Mrs Burnett said the problem was two-fold. ``Thanks to overscheduling, television and high tech toys, children are at risk of forgettinghow to play, she said. `` Then there are parents not knowing how to managewhen their children are bored, the default becomes putting on the television.She is regularly approached by parents needing help and ideas for playing withtheir children and, being a stay-at-home-mum herself, saw Playopedia as a wayto help fellow mums. ``Were told thatchildren should have limited TV viewing hours. So if I dont want to put mychild in front of the TV, what can I do? How do I make it fun so that they wantto engage in something else? she said.

Playopedia, which is a housed on what has become one ofAustralias largest parenting blogs Childhood 101, offers unique, quality playideas that can easily be replicated at home. ``I really try to focus on presentingplay activities that demonstrate to parents the importance of childrens play.The play ideas are sorted according to type of play and the collection issearchable, so it is a great resource for parents of young children. Parentscan search to find play dough recipes or play activities to encourage outdoorplaytime - whatever type of play their child enjoys.

Mrs Burnett said new play ideas were being added every twodays, with the database already boasting 150-plus activities from around theworld. ``I am committed to keeping that growth going, because Im so passionateabout how children learn. Im frustrated by the current state of our educationsystem and the early years curriculum becoming less and less play-based, evenin kindergarten. So Ill keep pushing the message that yes, children do learnthrough play.

The idea for Playopedia was sparked from a meme called WePlay hosted on Childhood 101 for over 12 months, where parents and teachersfrom around the world who were blogging about play ideas could link up. When oneof Christies online friends contacted her after she lost a heap of bookmarked playideas from the meme and dreaded the thought of going back through the thousandsof links to find those ideas again, Playopedia became a reality.

Christie Burnett livesin Perth and is a mum to three-year-old Immy, successful blogger at Childhood101 and an early childhood education teacher. She has taught kindergarten, preprimary and the first three grades of primary school. She spent six years inSydney as the founding director of a high quality child care centre with aplay-based program for 2-5 year olds. Christie also works as a presenter andconsultant training early childhood educators. Her blog, one of the first by ateacher and parent educator in Australia, won a Nuffnang award for BestParenting Blog against thousands of Asia Pacific wide blogs. Christie blogs at childhood101.com. You will find Playopedia atchildhood101/playopedia

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