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# Community Adventure Play Experience (CAPE) Toolkit

Sarah Lawrence College Child Development Institute

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Community Adventure  
Play Experience • CAPE

# Toolkit

SARAH  
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COLLEGE

CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

# Community Adventure Play Experiences (CAPEs)

## Toolkit

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\*All images used in this guide were taken by Sarah Lawrence College Child Development Institute faculty, staff, and volunteers with consent from those photographed.

## 1. Introduction

For thirty years, the Child Development Institute (CDI) at Sarah Lawrence College has been promoting a developmentally-informed view of children, childhood, and education, and serving as a resource for the College, surrounding communities, and beyond. CDI carries out its mission through public events, professional development programs, outreach, and collaborative projects.

CDI has a longstanding commitment to the importance of free play for the social, emotional, cognitive and imaginative lives of children. Play is at the heart of the progressive philosophy at our Early Childhood Center, and has been promoted in the mission and activities of CDI since its inception.

Free play takes somewhat different forms depending on the context in which it takes place. Over the past decade, we have been influenced by the tradition of Adventure Play, which grew out of the experiences of communities in Europe after World War II. According to Penny Wilson, the first adventure playgrounds were “compensatory environments” in the bombed-out cities of Copenhagen and London. These adventure playgrounds were intended to serve as “urban countrysides” for children who no longer had outdoor play spaces<sup>1</sup>. The materials were “loose parts” which could be carried and combined in many different ways. The key was that they would allow children to turn everyday objects into anything they wanted them to become.<sup>2</sup>

The kind of play which was enabled in these adventure playgrounds was defined as “freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated”.<sup>3</sup> This view expressed a number of important values about play, i.e. that it should be the domain of children choosing and actively deciding for themselves the course of their activity, “unadulterated” by the needs or agendas of adults. Adults should be as invisible as possible, their only role being to insure the safety of the play space.

Over the past decades, children are having fewer opportunities to engage in free play due to schools limiting play time, lack of outdoor play outlets, and heightened use of technology as a form of entertainment. To help address these concerns, in 2009, CDI began providing children with **community adventure play experiences (CAPEs)**, play experiences created by children using “loose parts” available in their communities such as cardboard boxes, tires, fabric, sand, wood, and direct their own play.



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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, P. “The Playwork Primer”, Alliance for Childhood, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, S., “How Not to Cheat Children: The Theory of Loose Parts”, Landscape Architecture, vol. 62, p. 30-35, 1971

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, P. “The Playwork Primer”, Alliance for Childhood, 2010

***These play experiences encourage children to use their imaginations, develop initiative, collaborate, and problem-solve using materials found in their communities.***

Play facilitators ensure a safe physical and emotional space and assist children in their play as directed by the children. The materials vary slightly by context, and are typically found in and around their homes, enabling children to continue to engage in these play experiences at home. CDI hosts CAPEs in schools, afterschool programs, neighborhood parks, city parks, and historical sites. CDI will set up trainings and help plan and initiate CAPEs in your community.

In 2015, CDI began to formally assess the impact of CAPEs on children's creative and imaginative play and on parents' and educators' perceptions of and attitudes regarding play. Findings from focus group discussions, interviews and observations of children's play during CAPEs suggest that children spend more time in self-directed free play with loose parts during and after the implementation of a CAPE, and that parents, teachers and community-based organization staff express a greater appreciation for this kind of play, and encourage it more after CAPEs.

We are deeply grateful to Community Playthings for their generous support of CAPEs from their inception. Their support has enabled us to develop this toolkit based on what we have learned from our experiences over the past seven years, as well as from assessments of the program. It is our hope that this will be a helpful resource to you.



## *II. Elements of CAPE*

Key aspects of CAPE are:

### *A. Community*

A central aspect of CAPEs is a community's involvement and interest in bringing these experiences to their children. Thus, taking time to learn about the community in which you wish to bring CAPEs is the first step.

Talk to members of the community, particularly those working with children and families:

- Who lives there?
- Who are the community leaders?
- What organizations serve the community?
- What are the community's strengths?
- What are the community's needs?
- Are there safe outdoor play spaces for children?
- Are the play spaces accessible and who is accessing them?



### *Community Partners*

Community partnerships are critical.

***Community organizations help provide an accessible and safe space for children, establish a sense of fellowship among residents, donate materials, advocate for learning through play, and support collaborative efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of these community adventure play experiences.***

Community partners for CAPE come in many different forms such as:

- Schools, afterschool programs, daycare centers, recreational programs, camps
- Parks and Recreation
- Community centers
- Museums
- Local government
- Children and play advocacy groups and associations
- Teacher groups and associations
- Parent groups and associations
- Family health centers
- Places of worship

## Children

All children are welcome to participate in CAPEs. Prior to the CAPE, the coordinator should learn as much as possible about the children (i.e. ages, language spoken, special needs, community they live in, availability and access to play spaces, access to free play time, etc.) to better serve the children.

## *B. Staff & Volunteers*

As with all outreach programs, CAPEs require a team of staff and volunteers to provide meaningful experiences for children.

### Coordinator

The coordinator is the “face” of CAPEs both internally and externally. Key responsibilities of the CAPE coordinator include:

- Create and maintain budget, keep track of expenses, and determine funding sources
- Recruit, train, and manage volunteer facilitators
- Identify and set up location to store materials
- Secure vehicle(s) and driver(s) to transport materials and volunteers
- Determine liability insurance needs and ensure coverage is provided for each CAPE
- Oversee collection and inventory of materials
- Publicize and promote CAPEs
- Connect with communities and identify community partners
- In collaboration with community partners, plan CAPE programming and ensure all logistical needs for the CAPE are met
- On the day of a CAPE, provide support to facilitators, connect with community partners and families, and problem solve as needed
- Follow up with community partners for feedback and adjust as needed
- Strategize on short and long-term direction for CAPEs



### Volunteer Facilitators

Volunteer facilitators are critical to providing support to both the coordinator and the children and families on the day of a CAPE.

***In adventure play, the role of adults is to be present in as unobtrusive a way as possible, to support children’s play but to not impose ideas or solutions of their own onto the play.***

The facilitators are called “playworkers”, and are trained to observe and reflect, intervening only to supply materials and enable the children’s play process.

Key responsibilities of the facilitators include:

- Collect materials and conduct material inventory prior to the CAPE
- Help ensure a safe emotional and physical space at the CAPE

- Ensure the cleanliness of the space before and after the CAPE
- Help with loading and unloading of materials
- Setup materials and bring out additional materials as needed
- Observe children’s play
- Be available to assist as requested by children
- Be available to assist coordinator and/or community partners
- Share observations and feedback with coordinator after the CAPE

### *C. Loose Parts*

***Loose parts are open ended materials that children can manipulate and use to create and build.***

They do not have a prescribed function or defined purpose and can be found in most households and communities. Natural and recyclable materials are preferred as they are environmentally friendly and can be used multiple times. (See Appendix C - Materials List)

Examples of loose parts include:

- cardboard boxes of varying sizes
- paper towel and toilet paper rolls
- fabric
- plastic containers
- twine
- paper
- natural materials such as sand, wood, water



In addition to the loose parts, children will need tools to manipulate the loose parts with such as:

- child friendly scissors
- masking tape
- crayons, washable markers, chalk

### *D. Free Play*

Children engaging in free play is central to CAPEs, where there are no boundaries to their imagination nor expectations for what they make or do with the loose parts.

***Children initiate and direct their play.***

It is critical that children’s right to free play is nurtured and protected at CAPEs. It is also important for the adults (i.e. parents, teachers, counselors, etc.) accompanying the children at CAPEs to carefully observe their play, so that they can help create a similar environment for children at home, school, afterschool programs, etc.



### III. Before CAPE

Developing the foundation and infrastructure for CAPEs involves:

#### A. Volunteer Recruitment & Training

Recruiting a team of CAPE volunteer facilitators requires significant time and effort. When recruiting volunteers:



- Aim to have a large volunteer base with at least twice as many volunteers as typically needed for a CAPE. Unexpected circumstances inevitably arise and having a large pool of volunteers helps counter any last-minute cancellations by volunteers or sudden increase in number of children expected at a CAPE.
- Aim to have a diverse volunteer base so children can see members of their community or facilitators who are similar to them in regard to gender, race, ethnicity, language spoken, etc. Also, having volunteers with varied backgrounds and careers can further enhance the interdisciplinary learning that takes place among the facilitators as well as assist with timing. For example, if volunteers are primarily students, scheduling CAPEs during school breaks or end of the semester may be challenging.
- Recruit volunteers who enjoy working with children and have experience working with children. Look for volunteers who are reliable, flexible, creative, and good communicators. Volunteers can be trained as facilitators, but their character and passion come from within!

Finding qualified volunteers can seem overwhelming at first. Recruitment strategies include:

- Start with those you know and those who know your organization well such as colleagues, community partners, neighbors, and friends.
- High school, college, and graduate students are often looking for volunteer experiences.
- Reach out to individuals who have significant experience working with children such as educators and parents.
- Talk to community partners for their thoughts on potential volunteers in the community and connecting you to them.
- Attend community meetings, gatherings, and events to meet people. While trying to make direct in-person connections, also seek out volunteers through postings online (websites, social media, volunteer boards, etc.)

Once you have interested candidates, next steps include:

- Conduct interviews and contact references. It is important to treat the hiring of volunteer facilitators similar to paid positions. The time spent getting to know and hire qualified facilitators is critical, as the volunteers are the backbone of CAPEs.
- Organize a training for volunteers where they have a chance to observe and participate in a CAPE and get a strong sense of the work involved and concepts behind CAPEs, and the opportunity to ask questions.
- All individuals working with children must undergo a background check.
- Provide ongoing support and mentorship to volunteers.

## *B. Material Collection & Storage (See Appendix C - Materials List)*

When collecting materials, consider the following factors:

- **Loose Parts** – all materials should be “loose parts” - something that children can manipulate and create with and does not have a prescribed function or a defined purpose
- **Accessibility** – materials should be things that can be found in almost all households or more broadly within the community in which the CAPE takes place, as determined by community partners
- **Sustainability** – materials should be collected with the intention of sustainability in mind
- **Safety** – materials should be safe - discuss what is safe within the community in which the CAPE is taking place
- **Cleanliness** – materials collected should be clean
- **Transportability** – materials should be easily transportable to the CAPE site
- **Variability** – materials should be varied

### **How to collect materials?**

- Spread the word at your organization – arrange for collection boxes in convenient locations. Be specific as to what you are looking for. The more tangible and concrete the request is, the more likely someone is to donate. Lead the way and start collecting items yourself and placing them in collection boxes as a source of motivation for others to also contribute materials.
- If you work at an organization such as a school that works directly with children and families, invite them to help collect materials. Children love collecting materials and seeing them be used. Examples of materials that can be collected at home include toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, fabric, plastic bottles, boxes, etc.
- Reach out to the community in which you will be holding CAPEs. Visit local stores for cardboard boxes, fabric, wood scraps, etc. Another opportunity for collecting materials is going to the community and/or local stores.

### **How to decide what to collect and bring to CAPE?**

- When considering which [materials](#) to bring to a particular CAPE, consider the number of children, age group, location, weather, and space size. For example, some materials are better suited for outdoors than indoors and others are better suited for large spaces than small spaces.

### **Where and how to store materials?**

- Store materials in a safe, clean, and cool location that can be easily accessed for transporting to CAPEs.
- Keep materials organized in clear labeled containers so they are easily identifiable for inventory and transportable for frequent loading and unloading.
- Invest in hand trucks to help with transporting materials



- Create a separate container for facilitators and coordinator that is present at each CAPE and contains the following items:
  - First aid kit
  - Trash bags
  - Hand sanitizer
  - Latex-free gloves
  - Insect repellent spray
  - Sunblock
  - A couple of bottles of water
  - Adult scissors
  - Tape

### *C. Transportation*

- Determine how materials will be transported to CAPEs. Do you have access to a large vehicle – van or truck? Who is qualified to drive it? Is there a fee? Is it insured? If you don't have access to a vehicle, does the community partner? What steps need to be taken to be included in liability coverage?
- Similarly, will transportation be provided for volunteers or just materials? If possible, having transportation for volunteers assists with ease of coordination and helps reduce barriers for volunteers to attend CAPEs.

### *D. Outreach*

CAPEs are often done in collaboration with community partners and organizations for children in their programs, schools, camps, etc. However, CAPEs can also be held in the community and open to the public. Each of these situations requires different forms of outreach.

#### *CAPEs with Community Partners*

##### **Whom to reach out to?**

- Community partners your organization works with
- Community partners who work in geographic areas with known need for play resources and space

##### **Where to have the CAPE?**

- Your organization's site
- Community Partner's site
- Public site/park

##### **What are logistics to consider when planning for CAPEs?**

- Location
- Plans for inclement weather
- Accessibility for individuals with physical disabilities
- Access to restrooms and drinking water
- Parking/Public transportation



- Loading/Unloading space
- Liability insurance for event
- Materials – Restrictions
- Expected number of attendees
- Dissemination of CAPE event information to children and families

### CAPEs Open to the Public

#### Whom to reach out to?

- Children and families your organization works with
- Community partners
- Schools, Libraries, Community Centers

#### Where to have the CAPE?

- Your organization's site
- Community Partner's site
- Public site/park

#### What are logistics to consider when planning for CAPEs?

- Location
- Plans for inclement weather
- Accessible for individuals with physical disabilities
- Access to restrooms and drinking water
- Parking/public transportation
- Loading/Unloading space
- Liability insurance for event
- Materials
- Expected number of attendees
- Publicity

#### How to recruit families?

- **Contacts** – Start with your organization's contacts with community partners, local newspapers, parks and recreation departments, schools, professionals working with children and families, local leaders, etc.
- **Social Media** – If your organization has social media accounts with followers, this is an effective way of communicating upcoming CAPE events.
- **Email subscribers** – Reach out to individuals who have signed up to receive information from your organization regarding upcoming events.
- **Local Newspapers and Online Community Events Calendars** – Make sure each event is listed on local newspaper calendars of events as well as local parenting and community event calendars.
- **Flyers and Posters** - Hang flyers and posters in strategic locations in the community such as libraries, community centers, coffee shops, etc.



## *IV. Day of CAPE*

The day of CAPE has arrived!

### *A. Meet with volunteer facilitators*

- Greet the volunteers and check them in as they arrive. Review the schedule for the CAPE again with the volunteers and give them an opportunity to ask questions.

### *B. Load materials*

- Lead the volunteers in loading materials that were set aside for this CAPE onto the vehicle(s). An assembly line system of loading materials is an efficient method. If volunteers are going in the vehicle as well, make sure all volunteers are accounted for before leaving.

### *C. Arrive at CAPE destination*

- Upon arriving at the site, meet contact at organization (if applicable) and introduce volunteers to contact. The organization contact shows the space to volunteers and points out key areas (where the CAPE will take place, physical boundaries for the CAPE, restrooms, water fountain, parking, etc.).

### *D. Setup*

- Volunteers unload materials and set up materials. Materials should be set out according to type (i.e. fabric, cardboard, plastic, string, etc.) and scattered throughout the space in piles. This way children can navigate through the space to look at materials available. Scattering the materials keeps the space open and reduces congestion around materials. Keeping the materials organized by type makes it easier to see the materials and does not send children messages of what materials should be used together.
- Volunteers should set aside some of the materials to have available as needed as the CAPE progresses.
- Volunteers should hang up a CAPE banner and any signs to direct families to the CAPE.

### *E. Meet & Greet*

- Welcome community partners, community members, families, and children to the CAPE.



### *F. Observe & Assist*

- Observation is a key component of CAPEs. Through observation, the coordinator, facilitators, families, and community members can learn:
  - Children's interests and approaches to play
  - The importance of open ended, child-directed play
  - The significance of loose parts in fostering and encouraging children's creativity and imagination
  - How to replicate CAPEs and other opportunities for free play with loose parts in different settings
  - What is working well with CAPEs and what needs improvement
- Be available to assist facilitators, children, families, and community partners as needed throughout the CAPE.



### *G. Clean Up*

- As the end of the CAPE nears, give children and families reminders of time left so children are aware and can finish what they are working on. Volunteers can slowly begin to clean up in the background.
- When the CAPE is officially over, volunteers clean up more fully and can involve children in the process by showing them where materials go back. Volunteers should assess materials on site and discard materials that cannot be reused.
- Volunteers load materials back onto vehicle.
- Thank community partners, families, children, and community members for coming. Take the opportunity to notify them of upcoming CAPEs.
- Make sure all volunteers are accounted for before heading back to material storage site.

### *H. Final Logistics*

- Volunteers unload materials from vehicle back to the material storage location.
- Thank volunteer facilitators and spend a few minutes discussing observations from the CAPE.

## V. *After CAPEs*

In the days following a CAPE:

### *A. Debrief with Facilitators (Group or Individually)*

- What did they observe?
- What stood out about children's play?
- What were their interactions with families like?
- What worked well?
- What could be done differently?



### *B. Follow up with Community Partners*

- What did they think of the CAPE?
- What stood out about children's play?
- What feedback did they receive?
- What worked well?
- What could be done differently?
- What are next steps? Publicity? Schedule another CAPE? Schedule CAPE training for organization staff/volunteers?

### *C. Material Inventory*

- Do an inventory of materials to learn what materials you need more of so that there is ample time to replenish before the next CAPE.

### *D. Budget*

- Update CAPE budget.

## VI. *Frequently Asked Questions*

### Frequently Asked Questions during CAPEs

#### Questions from facilitators:

#### **A child keeps asking me to tell him what to do or make. What do I do?**

Children enter CAPEs with varying degrees of experiences with self-directed play and levels of comfort in new situations. Try doing a walk-through with the child so the child can see all the materials available to her. Look through the materials with her and ask what she finds interesting. Another approach could be to ask if she sees other children working on something she would like to join. You can also try playing with the materials in a non-specific way (for example, cutting fabric into strips without making anything in particular) to engage her, and then support her as she transitions to take the lead.

#### **When children are role-playing and using inappropriate words, what should I do?**

If you hear children using inappropriate words, let them know those words are not to be used at CAPEs. Be mindful of not engaging in a discussion of "good words" and "bad words" which may cast judgment on both the child and the child's experiences outside of CAPEs. Clearly stating that we do not use those words at CAPEs helps to designate CAPEs as a safe space with certain community standards.

#### **If I see a verbal disagreement between children, when/how should I step-in?**

An important part of the facilitator's role is to ensure a safe emotional space. When children begin to disagree, observe for a moment to see whether the argument seems to be escalating or resolving itself. Take this time to observe and understand as much as you can of the context of their disagreement. If it becomes clear that a disagreement is becoming serious or unsafe, or one or both children are becoming upset, step in immediately. Let the CAPE coordinator know so he/she can assist you. First, listen to each child share his or her side of the disagreement, taking care that they are not interrupted or corrected as they share. Once each child has spoken, ask the children if anyone has a suggestion as to how to solve this disagreement. Try as much as possible to guide the conversation in such a way that children are solving their own problem, and that all voices are equally valued.

#### **If I see a physical disagreement between children, when/how should I step-in?**

Facilitators are present to ensure a safe physical space for children. If you see a physical disagreement, step in immediately. Begin by separating children from each other and asking them if they are okay. Attend to any first-aid needs as the first priority. Let the CAPE



coordinator know so he/she can assist you. Once everyone is attended to physically, listen to each child who is involved share his or her side of the disagreement, taking care that they are not interrupted or corrected as they share. Once each child has spoken, ask the children if anyone has a suggestion as to how to solve this disagreement. Try as much as possible to guide the conversation in such a way that children are solving their own problem, and that all voices are equally valued. The facilitator should remind all children that at CAPEs we cannot solve problems physically. It may be helpful to remind children of possibilities like walking away or asking an adult for help when they feel upset.

**There are other children's activities nearby that are not related to the CAPE that children are choosing to go to instead of the CAPE; how can I engage them to participate in the CAPE?**

It is important to support children in their choices (which may not always include CAPEs) and wish them fun in the activities they choose. Sometimes it may be evident that the child is not engaging in the CAPE because he/she is not sure what the CAPE is about and if he/she can participate. Asking a child an open ended and inviting question like "Would you like to make something?" can help a child feel welcomed.

**I notice that a child wants to participate in the CAPE, but her parents are directing her away from the CAPE. Is there anything I can do?**

It can be difficult to determine why parents are discouraging their children from engaging in a CAPE. At times it may be the case that the parents are unclear about what the CAPE is and it may be helpful to engage them in a conversation. In these situations, you can give parents more information about CAPEs and the use of recycled materials to help them better understand what children are doing at a CAPE. It is important to be mindful that the family may be leaving because they have other plans for the day or it may be the child's nap time or any number of reasons that are not evident. Facilitators should not interrupt conversations between parents and their children. While we want children to experience CAPEs, we do not want to take sides in conversations between families, which have many circumstances that we are not aware of.

**Can children take home what they make during a CAPE?**

Before the CAPE begins, check in with the lead CAPE facilitator/supervisor regarding how to approach this as he/she will have spoken to the contact at the collaborating organization regarding their policy or perspective on it. If the CAPE is held in a location that is open to the public, the typical policy has been that families can choose to take home what they made as long as it can be transported and does not involve large and hard-to-replace materials such as tires, big cardboard boxes, large pieces of wood, and dorm risers.

## Questions from Parents:

### **What are community adventure play experiences?**

Community adventure play experiences (CAPEs) are play experiences created by children using “loose parts” such as cardboard boxes, tires, fabric, wood, recyclables, and string. Loose parts provide endless possibilities for children’s play where each object can serve many different purposes. For example, a paper towel roll can serve as a telescope or a flute or a chimney of a home. During CAPEs, children direct their own play – choosing their materials, what to do with the materials, and who to interact with.

### **What is the significance of children engaging in these play experiences?**

During CAPEs, as children engage with recyclable materials and with each other, they are using their imaginations, developing initiative, building confidence, learning to collaborate, and gaining problem-solving skills.

### **Why are children playing with materials that look like “junk?”**

The materials used in the CAPE (i.e. cardboard boxes, recyclables, fabric, wood) are all materials from the community. Many of our materials can be found in homes and schools, enabling children to engage in this kind of play on a regular basis. These materials have been collected and handled with care to ensure they are safe for children to play with.

### **Can I play with my child at the CAPE?**

Yes. This is an opportunity to take your child’s lead, and to encourage the child to initiate and direct his or her own play. Parents can help facilitate their children’s play by observing them and learning what their children are interested in, and being available to assist as requested by the children.

### **What is your role as the facilitator?**

Facilitators play many roles to make sure that community adventure play experiences are safe, engaging, and empowering, creative spaces for children. Facilitators are present to provide a safe physical and emotional space for the children and to assist children in their play experiences as requested and guided by the children.

## VII. *Assessing Risk*

### **Assessing Risk in Adventure Play**

From its beginnings, the adventure play movement considered the issue of risk and risk management as part of their mandate. Play workers and advocates firmly held the belief that all free play must consider risk, and that the “benefits of experiencing risk far outweigh the damage done by never experiencing it or learning to cope with it” (Almon, 2014, p. 3). Learning to climb, swing, run and jump all entail assessing one’s limits and adjusting to the consequences of one’s actions. These are early and lifelong lessons.

Over the past few decades, and primarily in the US, children’s mobility and opportunity for unsupervised play have been significantly curtailed (Almon, p. 5). At the same time, fear and desire for supervision by adults have led to increased surveillance and monitoring of children’s play, which have all contributed to a steep decline in children’s access to free outdoor play opportunities. This has led many to ask how children might even come to assess their own risks without occasions to try out their abilities.

We can turn to the model offered by adventure play to help understand how to think about this issue. Playworkers have been researching this topic, and have demonstrated that the “opportunity to master increasingly challenging play is essential for safety in play” (Almon, 2014, p. 4). On adventure playgrounds, children can control their own risk taking (climb as far as they can or want to). Evidence has actually shown that adventure playgrounds have the same or fewer accidents than traditional playgrounds with permanent structures. (Almon, p. 23). In the US, we confuse risk with hazard and are intent on protecting children from both. In contrast, the idea of risk is not just physical, but rather is part of everyday life in the form of social risks and intellectual risks, where adults support children’s appropriate exposure in order to meet these developmental challenges.

One way for parents to let go of their fears is to observe their children playing, ideally returning to a familiar play space, watching children take risks and master their skills. At Sarah Lawrence, CDI also advocates for engaging parents in discussion about the benefits of play, and understanding and managing risk. As part of our CAPEs and ongoing research we are doing, we are discussing parents’ perceptions of play, and hopefully educating them on these topics.

The adventure playground tradition has built into their work the regular assessment of play spaces and risk management. There are models for how to do the kinds of “play audits” and risk analyses which lead to responsible supervision of children in adventure play spaces (Almon, p. 26). There are resources which we and other communities can make use of in order to think through these issues.

*Quotes from Almon, J. “Adventure: the value of risk in children’s play”, Alliance for Childhood, 2013*

## VIII. Looking Ahead

As with all programs, it is important to regularly evaluate, adjust as needed, and plan for the future. CAPEs are designed to be sustainable in the following ways:

- Loose part materials are found in homes, schools, and communities and can be reused multiple times
- Facilitators are volunteers
- Location is in a free, accessible space in the community
- Resources such as trainings and toolkits are provided without fees

However, CAPEs are not free of costs nor issues that can challenge a long-term outlook. There are inherent costs such as a CAPE coordinator stipend/salary, program and promotional materials, and transportation that require either institutional support or community support through grants. Additionally, in the current era of limited free play opportunities for children, the demand for CAPEs often exceeds the available personnel time to meet every request.

Our collective hope is that one day child-directed free play with loose parts will be the norm in homes, schools, parks, and communities all around the world. In the meantime, in our roles as community members, educators, advocates, parents, students, and playworkers, we can support each other and children through a CAPE network to make this vision a reality. CDI can work with you to train facilitators and establish CAPEs in your community. You can reach us at [cdi@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:cdi@sarahlawrence.edu).



## IX. Resources

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#### **Selected Online Resources**

Adventure Playgrounds: <http://adventureplaygrounds.hampshire.edu/>

Alliance for Childhood: <http://www.allianceforchildhood.org>

American Journal of Play - <http://www.journalofplay.org/>

Children and Nature Network - <https://www.childrenandnature.org/author/angelahanscom/>

Defending the Early Years - <http://deyproject.org/>

Free Play Network: <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/index.html>

Play Association Tower Hamlets: <http://www.playtowerhamlets.org.uk/index.php?page=Home>

Play England: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/>

Play Wales: <http://www.playwales.org.uk/>

Sarah Lawrence College Child Development Institute: <http://www.sarahlawrence.edu/cdi>

US Play Coalition: <http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/>

## X. Appendix

### A. Sample CAPE Flyer for Recruitment

#### Community Adventure Play Experiences



Community Adventure  
Play Experience • CAPE

#### What are they?

Community adventure play experiences are created by children using “loose parts” –cardboard boxes, tires, fabric, plastic bottles, recyclables, wood, and other materials. Community adventure play experiences can be set up anywhere there is space, a collection of loose parts, and children.

#### Who can come to community adventure play experiences?

Anyone! Community adventure play experiences can be enjoyed by children of all ages. Parents are welcome to come and see their children play, explore, and create!

#### Where do the materials come from?

From your home, friends, families, local schools in your area - start collecting toilet/paper towel rolls, egg cartons, tissue boxes and build your CAPE material collection from there.

#### When and where do they happen?

The Child Development Institute at Sarah Lawrence College hosts community adventure play experiences year-round in Yonkers and neighboring communities! Stay tuned for upcoming community adventure play experiences!

#### Why are community adventure play experiences important?

Community adventure play experiences encourage children to use their imaginations, develop initiative, collaborate, and problem-solve using materials from their own communities.

Child Development Institute  
Sarah Lawrence College  
1 Mead Way, Bronxville, New York 10708-5999  
(914) 395-2630  
[cdi@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:cdi@sarahlawrence.edu)  
<http://www.slc.edu/cdi/>



## *B. Sample Program Timeline*

### **CAPE Timeline**

#### Community Adventure Play Experience (CAPE) for children at:

Smith Community Center  
123 Green Lane  
Yonkers, NY 10710  
Friday October 5, 2012  
1-3 pm  
50 Children between ages 5 and 10  
5 staff members from Community Center  
6 CDI Volunteers and CAPE Coordinator

#### Day of CAPE Timeline for Volunteers

Friday October 5, 2012

12:00-12:15pm	Load the vans with materials
12:15pm	Depart campus in vans
12:30-1:00pm	Unload materials at Smith Community Center and set up (hang up sign, set out materials, find out where closest bathroom is located, and meet Community Center staff)
1:00-3:00pm	Community adventure play experience
3:00-3:30pm	Clean up, discard trash, and load vans
3:30pm	Depart Smith Community Center
3:45-4:15pm	Unload materials

#### Note

Above schedule can vary depending on the location of the CAPE and travel time, the number of volunteers and children involved, and the size of the CAPE space.

Also, the duration time of a CAPE can vary depending on the needs of the partnering organization. Community adventure play experiences usually range from 2-3 hours. Sometimes community adventure play experiences are broken up into segments (i.e. back to back 2-hour CAPE programs).

## C· Material List

### CAPE Materials

#### Things to be taken into consideration when collecting materials:

- **Loose Part** – all materials should be a “loose part” - something that children can manipulate and create with, that doesn’t have a prescribed function or a defined purpose
- **Accessibility** – materials should be things that can be found in almost all households *or* more broadly within the community in which the CAPE takes place, as determined by community partners
- **Sustainability** – materials should be collected with the intention of sustainability in mind
- **Transportability** – materials should be easily transported to the CAPE site, and should be able to be stored in an accessible place
- **Variability** – take some time to consider what level of variability of materials is possible within the community in which the CAPE is taking place
- **Community connection** – consider materials that may be typically used for outdoor and imaginative play within the community in which the CAPE is taking place
- **Safety** – avoid sharp edges and hazardous materials, but be open to discussing what is safe within the community in which the CAPE is taking place
- **Cleanliness** – materials collected should be clean
- Before saying “no” to an item, see if it can be deconstructed for parts – sometimes materials are not usable as a whole, but fantastic as parts

#### Sample recommended materials for CAPEs

##### Cardboard

- boxes
- toilet paper rolls
- packing materials

##### Paper

- scrap paper
- construction paper
- newspapers

##### Plastic

- empty water jugs
- containers
- buckets
- pipes & tubes
- dorm risers
- bubble wrap

##### Natural materials

- water

- sand

- pinecones
- drift wood
- sticks & twigs
- leaves

##### Wood

- wooden spoons
- clothes pins
- scrap wood
- wood shavings

##### Connecting materials

- twine
- thick string or rope
- wool
- duct tape
- masking tape
- paper glue

##### Textiles

- scrap fabric
- old clothing

##### Craft supplies

- children’s scissors
- chalk
- washable markers
- crayons
- washable, nontoxic paint
- paint brushes

##### Additional Resources

- first aid kit
- sunscreen & bug spray
- latex-free gloves
- trash bags
- old t-shirts (smocks)

#### Materials that are NOT RECOMMENDED for CAPEs

- non-loose parts
- electronics & toys
- confetti & glitter
- styrofoam & glass
- oil & acrylic paints
- toxic materials
- non-environmentally friendly materials

## *D. Role of a Facilitator & Safety*

### **What is the CAPE Facilitator's Role?**

In adventure play, the role of adults is to be present in as unobtrusive a way as possible, to support children's play but to not impose ideas or solutions of their own onto the play. The facilitators are called "playworkers", and are trained to observe and reflect, intervening only to supply materials and enable the children's play process.

### **Facilitator Safety Guidelines**

1. Be safe and make sure others around you are safe and do not get hurt.
2. Before the children arrive, pick up any glass/garbage/material you notice in the play space that should not be there.
3. Make sure you are familiar with the parameters of the designated play space. Be aware of and demarcate if there are areas that should not be played with during the community adventure play experience (ex. tables or playground structures).
4. Make sure you know where the water fountain or water is located for children to access.
5. Make sure you know where the first aid kit is located.
6. Make sure children stay within the parameters of the designated play space.
7. Intervene when (ideally before) children start to use each other as community adventure play experience materials or engage in other unsafe activities.
8. If during the community adventure play experience, you notice flying objects (packing popcorn, loose paper) or items that have the potential to fly, please pick them up and secure them.
9. Make sure the play space is left as clean as or cleaner than it was when you arrived.

*E. Sample Photo Consent (English and Spanish)*

**Photo/Film/Videotape Consent**

---

Event/Shoot Title

---

Date

The undersigned does hereby authorize Sarah Lawrence College and/or its associates, assistants, or subcontractors to photograph/film/videotape:

---

Name of Minor Child *(Please print.)*

The undersigned authorizes Sarah Lawrence College to permit the use and display of said images in any publication, multimedia production, display, advertisement, social media channel, or Web page that promotes the College.

The undersigned releases and forever discharges Sarah Lawrence College, its agents, officers, and employees from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of said photographs / images, including but not limited to, any claims for invasion of privacy or defamation.

Accepted and Agreed:

---

Name of Parent or Guardian of Minor Child *(Please print.)*

---

Signature of Parent or Guardian of Minor Child

---

Date

**Consentimiento para fotografía, video y película**

---

Título del evento o sesión fotográfica

---

Fecha

El firmante autoriza a Sarah Lawrence College y sus asociados, asistentes y/o subcontratistas que fotografen, filmen o tomen video:

---

Nombre del menor (*Por favor imprime.*)

El firmante autoriza a Sarah Lawrence College el permiso de usar y mostrar los imagines en cualquier publicación, producción multimedia, mostrador, publicidad, los canales de medios sociales, o página del Web que promueve el Colegio.

El firmante autoriza y libera para siempre a Sarah Lawrence College, sus agentes, oficiales, y empleados de toda y cualquier reclamaciones y demandas que sean derivadas por o en conexión con el use de las fotografías/imagenes, incluyendo per no limitado a cualquier reclamacion por invasión de la privacidad o difamación.

Aceptado y de Acuerdo:

---

Nombre del padre o guardián del menor (*Por favor imprime.*)

---

Firma del padre o guardián del menor

---

Fecha

## *F. Sample Parent Information Sheet (English and Spanish)*



Community Adventure  
Play Experience · CAPE

***Thank you for being a part of today's Community Adventure Play Experience (CAPE)!***

**Interested in continuing today's experience at home or school or in another setting?**

**What do you need?**

Start collecting recyclable and found materials such as:

- Cardboard boxes of different shapes and sizes
- Paper towel and toilet paper rolls
- Fabric
- Plastic bottles
- Sticks, stones, pinecones, wood

The possibilities are endless! Clean the materials and keep them in a dry, safe space. Set aside children's scissors, crayons or colored pencils, and tape as needed.

**What can you do?**

- Encourage your child to initiate and direct his or her own play
- Observe your child and learn what he or she is interested in
- Be available to assist as requested by your child
- Take your child outdoors whenever possible so your child can play with materials found in nature

**Why are these experiences important for children?**

When children engage with loose parts such as recyclable and natural materials, they are having fun as well as using their imaginations, developing initiative, building confidence, testing new ideas, and problem solving.

If you have any questions, contact us at 914-395-2630 or [cdi@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:cdi@sarahlawrence.edu). We look forward to seeing you soon!



¡Gracias por formar parte de esta Experiencia Comunitaria de Aventura y Juego (CAPE)!

¿Estás interesado en continuar la experiencia de hoy en casa, en la escuela o en otro lugar?

¿Qué necesitas?

Empezar a coleccionar materiales reciclados y rescatados como:

- Cajas de cartón de diferentes formas y tamaños
- Rollos de cartón del papel de baño y de las toallas de papel
- Tela
- Botellas de plástico
- Palos, piedras, piñas de árboles, madera

¡Las posibilidades son infinitas! Limpia los materiales y mantenlos en un lugar seco y seguro. Ten a la mano tijeras infantiles, crayones o lápices de colores y cinta adhesiva.

¿Qué puedes hacer?

- Anima a tu niño a iniciar y dirigir su propio juego
- Observa a tu niño y fíjate en las cosas que le interesan
- Asiste a tu niño cuando te lo pida
- Siempre que sea posible, saca a tu niño al aire libre para que juegue con materiales encontrados en la naturaleza

¿Por qué son importantes estas experiencias?

Cuando los niños interactúan con partes sueltas como son los materiales reciclados y los materiales naturales, se están divirtiendo y usando su imaginación al mismo tiempo, están desarrollando su capacidad de iniciativa, fortaleciendo su confianza, probando nuevas ideas y resolviendo problemas.

Si tienes alguna duda, contáctanos al 914-395-2630 o [cdi@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:cdi@sarahlawrence.edu). ¡Esperamos verte pronto!