

## A CHILD'S PLAY!

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<b>Key Words</b>	Research, Special Populations, Social Consciousness
<b>Category</b>	Project Type: Educational
<b>Type</b>	Studio Project
<b>Level</b>	Junior
<b>Duration</b>	4 weeks
<b>Abstract</b>	This project was designed to raise the students' social consciousness, increase their awareness of the importance of the research process, and to introduce them to design for special groups. Project requirements included group research, assimilation of the research findings, and individual development of project solutions.
<b>Objectives</b>	To increase the student's understanding of the importance of the research process, and To introduce design for special groups through the creation of a playroom in a center for abused children, which provides a physically and psychologically safe environment.
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Primary Design Considerations</b> Safety of the children; limited budget; cleanability of materials; and indestructibility of materials were the goals of the design.  <b>Client Profile</b> Abused children were from three to five years of age. The students were advised to consider that because these children had been abused, they could also be developmentally disabled.  <b>Spatial Information</b> The plan of an existing day care space, 61' --0" x 39' --6", was provided for the students. There was one exit from the space into a central corridor, and windows lined the north and south walls.
<b>Process</b>	<b>Phase 1</b> Group Research Projects. (four to five person teams) Each team drew (from a bag) a specific research topic which they were responsible for developing in detail. Specific research assignments or

responsibilities for each team member were to be decided by the group and submitted to the instructor in writing. Research findings were to be compiled in a written form (typed), which was to include source citations (end notes) and a complete bibliography. The primary findings were then to be condensed into a two to three page handout, which the team was to make available to each member of the class. In addition, each team gave an oral presentation of their research findings, with time allotted for questions from class members. Research topics included the following:

#### *Group 1*

This group focused their research on the facts and figures concerning child abuse. In addition to general statistics, they examined the literature for information on the types of environments from which these children come. At least one resource person from the community had to be interviewed as part of this group's data gathering techniques.

#### *Group 2*

The research of this group focused on environmental concerns for the abused child. The question that they had to attempt to answer was: What constitutes a psychologically safe environment? A second aspect of their report included an overview of appropriate building codes which were applicable to child care/play facilities. This group was encouraged to interview the director of a child care facility.

#### *Group 3*

This group surveyed the literature currently available on designing for children. Specific areas on which they were to focus included safety concerns in designing for children, color use and psychology ' and anthropometric data for children ages three to five.

#### *Group 4*

This group put together a video presentation on a play environment from a child's perspective. The question that they were given to consider was: What does the world look like from a child's point of view? The video was to be a minimum of five minutes in length and was to be carefully scripted to contain relevant information. At the end of the video, the team was to make specific recommendations on designing for children based on their observations. This was to be a thoughtful piece on a child's perception of the world.

#### *Phase 2*

Individual Project Development (based on analysis of the research presented by the four teams)

**Presentation** Team-generated research paper  
Concept statement  
Plan view of spatial layout rendered in color  
Materials and furniture selection board(s)

Rendered perspective of space

**Evaluation**

Grading Criteria.

- Research component (team effort).....30 points
- Concept statement.....5 points
- Functional aspects of design solution.....10 points
- Application of design principles to design solution..... 10 points
- Appropriate application of research information to design solution..... 10 points
- Material selection.....10 points
- Selection of furnishings..... 5 points
- Graphic presentation ..... 10 points
- Visual and verbal presentation ..... 10 points

**Resources**

A representative from the local child abuse council was invited to speak to the class. An extensive period for questions and answers was scheduled after her presentation.

Class members also went to the college's child development laboratory and preschool to observe children at play. The students sat in the observation booth and made notes on what they observed. Later, they were encouraged to enter the room and interact with the children.

Several teams also chose to visit various day care facilities in the community.