

PARIS 2008 SAFE TOY POSTER SESSION

The aim of this activity was to try to discover what Toy Librarians, who must be regarded as the professionals in Toy Libraries, consider to be a SAFE TOY; and to share and learn about this from each other. There were entries from Japan, Brazil, South Africa, Italy, England, Korea and India.

The entries were:-

1. Tactile Caterpillar
2. Push Car
3. Clapper (clacker)
4. Dangle Dolly
5. Bear Puzzle
6. My Body Puzzle
7. My Car
8. Useful Post Box
9. Fun Flannel Graph
10. PLAYWAY BOOKS
11. Mr. Caprice
12. The Insect Species
13. Walddorf Doll
14. Indian Puzzle
15. Chameleon Todo's Hide and Seek
16. Catch Ball Set
17. Cloth Picture Book
18. Blocks (plastic)
19. Blocks (wood)
20. Fruit Basket (cloth)
21. Origami
22. Tapestry (cloth)
23. Throwing Ball Game
24. Apron Theatre
25. Cloth Ball

The conference participants visiting the Poster Session were asked to contribute to a Collage "WHAT IS A SAFE TOY" and/or evaluate the toys in the

exhibition.

“WHAT IS A SAFE TOY” Collage – comments:-

- Something that makes a child happy
- A non-toxic toy that is not harmful
- My Mummy
- No sharp edges
- Strong fabric that cannot tear
- A toy that will make a child happy without harming the child
- A toy that a child can learn from
- A toy that cannot harm a child
- A toy that cannot hurt or damage a child or its feelings
- No small pieces that can be swallowed
- Toy must be right for the age of the child or adult

Comments from those who chose to evaluate the Toys were:-

- 1. CATERPILAR - Needs to be bigger to be more effective.
Good idea for matching.'
Safe – double stitched
- 2. PUSH CAR – Made from wood. Children like putting things in their mouth; this won't harm them and is not easily broken.
Safe. No sharp edges. Wheels riveted on
- 3. CLACKER - Unsafe and easily broken
- 4. DANGLE DOLLY - Unsafe and easily broken
- 5. BEAR PUZZLE - Safe
- 6. MY BODY PUZZLE - Safe
- 7. MY CAR - Safe
- 8. POSTING BOX - Safe for age and situation intended
- 9. FLANNEL GRAPH – safe for age intended
- 10. MY PLAYWAY BOOKS – safe
- 11.MR. CAPRICE – Great fun. Can be used in story telling. Opportunity to discuss feelings with a child.
- 12. INSECT SPECIES – Attractive. Well made. Limited play use though.
Could be included in a story
- 13. WALDORF DOLL – Attractive. Soft to handle. Comfortable and comforting for a child.

- 14. INDIAN DOLL PUZZLE – Safe. Great puzzle – excellent for co-ordination and little fingers that do not work well. Bright and cheerful. Attractive for a child to play with. Good size pieces to handle. Not washable
- 15. CHAMELEON TODO'S – HIDE AND SEEK – Colourful, bright, but is it washable. Very jolly! Good for fine motor movement. Have idea of Chameleon and changing colours. Good conversation point.
- 17. PUZZLE BOOK – Gorgeous
- 18. BLOCKS (PLASTIC) safe and easily washed
- 19. BLOCKS (WOODEN) - Children will not be harmed if they put these in their mouth. Not easily broken.
- 20. FRUIT BASKET (CLOTH) – Fruits are loved by children. They are made of material not harmful. Can also be peeled. Safe – but not washable.
- 22. TAPESTRY (CLOTH) – safe and superb
- 23. THROWING BALL GAME – safe and superb
- 24. APRON THEATRE – Story apron – superb
- 25. CLOTH BALL – safe but not washable

In order to come up with some idea of WHAT IS A SAFE TOY as shown by these comments I first took the Collage and Evaluation separately.

The Collage comments easily fell into the following five categories:-

1. Comfort Zone – 4
2. Physical safety/harm – 3
3. Age appropriate – 1
4. Materials – 2
5. Education/learning – 1

The Evaluation comments were more varied and I listed them as follows:-

1. Play Value 3
2. Materials 7
3. Size of Toy 2
4. Education – colours 6
5. Washable 6
6. Size of pieces (puzzles) 3

7. Age appropriate 3
8. Physical development (fine motor) 2
9. Comfort Zone (feelings, happiness, fun, story telling 11 (eleven)

When the comments of the Collage and the Evaluation are summarized and combined the results are as follows:-

1. COMFORT ZONE - 14 points or 33% (including feelings, happiness, fun, story telling, play value)
2. MATERIALS - 13 points or 30% (choice of materials, washable, safety, cleanliness, germs)
3. EDUCATION - 8 points or 18% (colours, fine motor, language)
4. AGE APPROPRIATE 8 points or 18 % (size of pieces, size of toy, safety)

The Safe Toy Poster Session showed that those who participated have a real concern for the welfare of those who play with toys; the top priority for feelings, happiness, fun, story telling and play value all concerned with the mental and emotional health and development of the player. The choice of materials, a close second priority, revealing an almost equal concern for the physical safety of each player. Education and Age Appropriateness share the third priority indicating a similar emphasis on the educational properties and the age of the player.

I must thank all those who participated and also apologise for the somewhat disorganized beginning of the session. I had entered by the back entrance of the venue each day with no problem (this was the closest to my hotel) but THAT day I was stopped with many other innocent and anxious “waiters” until the guard at the entrance obtained official permission to allow us in and personally escort us to the elevator to make sure we arrived at our destination safely! We did - but late – to find that the enthusiastic Japanese Toy Ladies had brought all their toys and already had a “show” underway. I was very sorry to have to explain that other groups were also bringing toys so space was limited and we only needed A TOY or at most 10 toys for the evaluation --- this was sorted out and we managed to find space for everyone. The Brazilian team brought sacks of toys and displayed the on the opposite side of the hall and we didn't discover until very near the end of our 2 hours that they were actually participating in the Safe Toy Session! Of course, we scrambled to include them and wish that we

had spent more time looking at their intriguing display. Then as we were beginning to pack up along came Sophia with all her lovely toys from India. I think she was able to find a place to “set-up-shop” just alongside the Japanese Table. Giorgio (Italy) was going to provide a big poster and a power point illustrated presentation but couldn't come at all because of some sickness. And South Africa brought me their contribution just as I was leaving the venue to return to my hotel in the evening. Considering these setbacks it was quite amazing that we achieved even a little bit of our goal.

Several people had sent information about safety requirements in their countries and these were copied and displayed. From time to time we played the WPD Song in English and Japanese on my miniscule tape recorder as background music.

This was a first attempt at such a session and there was some misunderstanding about what was required in the way of exhibits. I hope we can continue this kind of research and perhaps come up with some specifics about materials to use and not to use, things to look out for in deciding whether a toy is safe or not, so that we can train toy librarians and advise parents.

In spite of the disorganization and the misunderstandings I think that we can at least say that “A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL”. Thank you to everyone who helped by carrying toys, moving tables and screens and exhibiting, collating and evaluating. I hope this is not the END! And look forward to continuing to discover “WHAT IS A SAFE TOY”

Sincerely, Freda Kim (Founder of WPD including the Safe Toy Session)