

## Book Review

---

### **What If Everybody Understood Child Development?**

R. Pica

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, SAGE publishing, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-4833-8184-8

If, like me, you are an Educational Psychologist who constantly grapples with the translation of child development research into meaningful practice, then this is a book for you. Rae Pica uses her experience as a practitioner and consultant in early years education to present a clearly written and accessible tool for parents and professionals. Rae has been a children's movement specialist since 1980 and is the founder/director of Moving and Learning, a company offering services and materials related to physical activity for children from birth to age eight. She is also co-creator and host of the radio program "Body, Mind, and Child". As an EP, it won't tell you much that you don't already know about early childhood development, but its strength comes from presenting research in bite-sized, relevant and accessible chunks for those seeking ideas for practice in the classroom and beyond.

The book has three main sections: Understanding Children, Understanding the Mind/Body Connection and Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Within each Pica presents a total of 29 short overviews of varied aspects of child development, finishing with a section on strategies: "What's a teacher to do?" and a section on further learning: "Where to learn more". The chapters are diverse and sometimes slightly controversial in their focus and perspective. They range from 'risk taking': "Bubble wrapping not required" to the importance of a 'growth mindset': "Failure is an Option" and the importance of Play: "Play is Not a four letter word". The joy of this book comes from the way in which it gently, but firmly, challenges everyday practice. Pica references the evidence base, although does not go into this in great detail, and then asks what this might mean to working with children. The concise chapters are easy to dip into and lend themselves well to discussion or reflection.

This is not a book which presents an in depth critique of child development and implications for practice. If you were looking for an academic text on child development it would therefore be unlikely to suit your purposes. Although it does reference some key contemporary thought in child development (Growth mindset, self-regulation etc.), it does so with a light touch, which makes it less intimidating for practitioners and parents. I have found it a useful reference when working with staff on issues which have arisen in consultations such as the need, or not, for standardised testing, the importance of active learning, and classroom management techniques: "Time to give time out a time out". It is also helpful when working with parents interested in play and development: "iPads or Play-Doh".

In summary, *What If Everybody Understood Child Development?* is not a text which has set me off in new directions in my thinking as a Psychologist, because the topics and the questions it poses are those I grapple with on a daily basis. For example, "Are you trying to create compliant students or engaged learners?" However, it is an excellent exploration of child development and learning that can support creative EP practice with colleagues and parents.

**Dr Sarah Hulme**

Associate Tutor on the MSc Educational Psychology Programme, University of Dundee