Play: Its Uses and Importance in Development, Early Intervention, and Early Childhood Special Education

Tuesday, April 24 - 5:00-6:30 pm,

Karen Lifter, Professor at Northeastern University will discuss the uses and importance of play in development, early intervention and childhood special education. Play is a natural activity of early childhood, which has great relevance to the fields of early intervention (EI), early childhood special education (ECSE), and early childhood education (ECE). Within these fields, ongoing tensions persist in how play is described and used. These tensions compromise activities of assessment, intervention, and curriculum development and their connections to research and practice.

This presentation will begin with a brief review of the importance of play in development. Next, the uses of play in EI, ECSE, and ECE will be outlined, with particular attention to areas of overlap and areas of confusion. Areas of confusion center on distinguishing between two major uses of play: (a) play as a developmental domain and (b) play as an activity base in the service of other goals. The contributions of different theoretical perspectives and research traditions to these uses, in addition to the evidence in support of each perspective, will be presented. Finally, the audience will be invited to discuss the implications of these confusions in the literature as well as potential future directions for research, policy, and practice. All are welcome to attend. This session will be held in NAC 4/220B.