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**TOO MUCH, TOO SOON?**  
EARLY LEARNING AND THE EROSION OF CHILDHOOD

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## TOO MUCH, TOO SOON?

EARLY LEARNING  
AND THE EROSION OF CHILDHOOD

**EDITED BY RICHARD HOUSE**

Surely the most important book on children's learning  
and well-being published this year.

*Professor Janet Moyles*

# TOO MUCH, TOO SOON?

## EARLY LEARNING AND THE EROSION OF CHILDHOOD

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*Too Much, Too Soon* argues that we are failing our young children. Many eminent educators, psychologists, policy-makers, scientists and academic researchers endorse the book's analysis and constructive proposals. These will spark a lively national debate about early years education and children's needs. This book is an essential resource for early years educators, lecturers, carers, psychologists, parents and policy-makers working with children.

British children are among the unhappiest in Europe, with relatively poor levels of educational attainment. So when the English Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) became law, Open EYE argued that the EYFS could even make matters worse. The literacy targets were politically driven, imposed too young, and ignored research and children's development paths. EYFS was like building a house by starting with the roof and working downwards before laying proper foundations. It was too much too young, with too little play, and it eroded childhood.

*Too Much, Too Soon?* tackles the burning question of how to nurture young children's well-being and learning. Children's lives are speeded up by commercialisation, 'adultification', and the government's so-called 'nappy curriculum' which pushes mandatory, overly cognitive learning at too young an age. These 23 hard-hitting chapters by educators, researchers and policy-makers advocate wise, practical ways for slowing childhood, better policy-making and the 'right learning at the right time'.

*Introduction* **Richard House**; *Foreword* **Annette Brooke MP**; *Preface*, **Steve Biddulph**

Part 1: *Policy-making and the Erosion of Childhood: The Case of the Early Years*

*Foundation Stage*, incl. **Penelope Leach** on children's real early learning foundations.

II: *The Foundations of Child Development and Early Learning: Perspectives, Principles and*

*Practices*: respected international authorities on play, neuroscience, child development, learning readiness, psychology and early education, incl. 'Physical foundations for

learning' by **Sally Goddard Blythe** and 'Can we play?' **David Elkind**; plus **Sylvie**

**Hétu**, **Lillian Katz**, **Lynne Oldfield**, **Tricia David**, **Wendy Ellyatt**, **Hillevi Lenz**

**Taguchi**, **Kim Simpson**. Part III; *Advocacy, Research and Policy-making for Children's*

*Early Years Learning*: **Sue Palmer**, **Sebastian Suggate**, **Aric Sigman**, **Richard House**;

Part IV: *Ways Ahead*; **Grethe Hooper Hansen**, **Barry Sheerman MP**; **Richard**

**House** and **Wendy Scott**, *Recommendations and Ways Ahead*. Index

New research in the book argues that the more we push early cognitively based learning, the less young children really learn through free, creative play, and also the more we disrupt the laying of a truly effective foundation for later formal learning. **Dr Sebastian Suggate's** path-breaking literacy research shows no difference by Year 3 between those children taught to read early, and those taught later. This reinforces the argument for a creative, physically active, play-led early years curriculum, as found in Scandinavia, Holland and Germany.

Wendy Scott and Richard House offer well-reasoned conclusions and recommendations for educators that have the practical potential to shift early years education and policy-making on to sounder foundations.

This book is a timely resource for educators, nursery teachers, carers, early education lecturers, researchers, policy-makers, parents, child clinical and educational psychologists. It is relevant to all interested in child development, early years education, childcare, policy, research, play and literacy.

This timely book offers a wide-ranging collective wisdom on how to optimize the individual potential of the next generation.

**Baroness Susan Greenfield**

The government is focused on getting young children ready for school instead of on getting them ready for life. Early and rigid academic goals are often achieved at the expense of social and emotional growth. Learning is for life not for school.

**Penelope Leach**

Many health and education experts now link the 'too much, too soon' mind-set to increased stress in children and decreased levels of creativity, curiosity, problem-solving, and social capacity. It is high time for a paradigm shift, and this book can serve as a lever to bring that about. **Joan Almon, Alliance for Childhood, former kindergarten teacher**

Offers well-reasoned recommendations for policy, indispensable reading for all concerned with children in their early years.

**Kevin J. Brehony,**

**Froebel Professor of Early Childhood Studies, Roehampton University**

A clarion call for evidence-based educational reform.

**Professor Kathy Hirsh-Pasek**

Some of the most outstanding and capable advocates of children's well-being in the UK today.

**Steve Biddulph**, Preface

An overwhelming case for meeting the needs of children in the early years.

**Oliver James, psychologist and author**

Children's early experiences have life-long effects on their values, attitudes and personal life-chances. *Too Much, Too Soon?* argues that Britain is letting down an entire generation. Politicians, parents and educators can't afford to ignore this message.

**Sue Palmer**, literacy specialist, author of *Toxic Childhood*