

PLAYING TO LEARN:
SANDPLAY IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
FALL 2000
REVIEWED BY JILL SHIRA GUICE, MFT

A small but dedicated group attended the screening of Alison Van Dyk's video *Playing to Learn: Sandplay in Preschool Education*. Previously, Alison had created the video titled *The Legacy of Margaret Lowenfeld*.

The 36-minute video highlighted Alison's sandtray therapy and developmental education program in a parochial preschool in the South Bronx where she has been working two days a week for the last ten years, seeing twelve children a week. Included in the video are several clips of therapy sessions, interviews with teachers and testimonials from parents. These parents recalled their initial fears about the therapy and honestly described how they had felt judged, and had been certain that their child had been singled out. It was encouraging to see how positively they viewed the program after seeing the wonderful changes in their children resulting from the therapy.

The video also outlined the assessment program, which Alison used, including a draw-an-animal projective test (LADS), the Lowenfeld Mosaic Test and the Lowenfeld Kaleidoblocks. These tests were used to determine the child's developmental level and whether the child needed therapy. The video shows how sandplay can assist the milestones of early childhood, which are the foundation of cognitive development. The video clearly demonstrates the value of early intervention into a child's social-emotional problems. As one who has worked with older children who have not received any early help, it is clear to me that mental health and education programs need to focus on the early years and specifically on the prevention of problems, which will inevitably require huge resources later when left untreated. It also demonstrates that early intervention prevents youth violence--a goal that is perhaps uppermost in our society's current consciousness.

One strength of the video is its accessibility. Parents, lay people, and professionals will find it compelling because of the poignancy of the families' stories and the heartfelt gratitude of the parents. The film models how parents, therapists and educators can work together for the good of children. As active promoters of sandtray, I believe that it is our task to implement similar programs in our own communities. We need more cooperative strategies to obtain funding by government or private donors.

You may contact Alison by [email](#), or visit her website at www.sandplay.net.