

1. Introductory Letter

Play Adventures

Naomi Sukenik

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The Play Adventures mission is to create an environment that encourages children to access their innate curiosity and playfulness through creative play with a wide range of materials. Self-determined play in a rich, child-led environment, encourages creativity, artistic expression, resilience, and personal discovery. Children and youth in Play Adventures settings have the opportunity to think big, problem solve, resolve conflicts and be inspired by peers. Most importantly (since coming out of Covid) participants in Play Adventures get the needed time to socialize with a multi-aged group, helping to relieve stress, anxiety and depression.

Our short term goal involves continuing our current programming, which has garnered a degree of success in the area, with many families following our journey and their children benefiting from our work. Our midterm goal is to analyze past work and revive previous successful programming which COVID-19 forced to a halt, offering camps during school breaks and free community Pop Up Play Days. Lastly, Play Adventures dreams big; our long term goal is to open an Adventure Playground to the public. We would continue offering programming for children and youth, workshops for parents and professionals, high-value community collaborations and partnerships for organizations. At all times and through all things, we address the child care shortage in Merced by offering a variety of attendance options, based on different family needs. Memberships, free play, subsidized or scholarship based, and sliding scale tiers are available based on needs of the family.

Play Adventures plans to use the funding for multiple purposes. Firstly, we would like to offer two additional Create Your Own Adventure day camps to the public at an affordable rate, competitive with camps offered by the City of Merced. (Create Your Own Adventure camps are 4-day Play Adventures opportunities that take place during school breaks to relieve the child care burden on working caregivers.) In addition to offering these additional day camps, we would like to begin one new program, called the "Junior Playworker Course," centered around youth ages 12-17. The goal of this program would be to teach Junior Playworkers vocational skills, instilling playwork as an approach to child connectedness, and of course returning efforts to the community by implementing Pop Up Play Days with an attached protocol for reflection and analysis. Through this program, we will be able to commit ourselves to providing 3-5 Community Pop Up Play Days at community events.

Reaching a diverse population is one of our highest held values. Our ideal programming would offer community, play and social interaction, learning through

experiences for a wide range of ages and including their caregivers and significant adults through workshops and outings.

We have made many big strides in collaborating with Merced city and its community organizations. See Addendum A for our list of experience, past and current projects and their description.

We look forward to receiving Community Funding to build a playful, child-centered, city!

Best,
Naomi Sukenik

2. Individual Staff Experience

Play Adventures' founder and CEO, Naomi Sukenik, MA in Nonprofit Management, BEd in Special Education, licensed site supervisor and is a certified Playworker. She will run the administrative aspect (scheduling, marketing, finances, grant writing, planning professional training), the professional development of the staff and model playwork in shifts with the Play Team. Naomi has been practicing playwork for 7 years and has worked in early childhood for two decades.

Our Assistant Director, Kimberly Jarrett, holds a BA in Child Development and is a multiple subjects credentialed teacher, with a background in Waldorf education. She has long proven her ability to keep the integrity and quality of our program to the highest standards. She is a competent leader and teacher while modeling playwork and best practices for the needs of our children. She has an integral role in our staff development. Kim has been practicing playwork for over two years.

Tania Martinez- Lead playworker- Tania has an incredible knack for playwork and has empowered many children to believe in their capabilities. She is a crucial part of our team for two years and leads other staff unequivocally. She is Spanish speaking, allowing our Spanish speaking children to converse in their mother tongue.

Our staff consists of 4 additional part time playwork employees that are still learning and earning experience. Our weekly meetings help support the triumphs and hardships of the daily events by reflecting, learning and discussing best practice together (i.e. conflict resolution, problem solving, encouraging agency etc). Play Adventures' proposed professional development and training, define a skill set and play based knowledge base for early childhood educators that will help improve the ways in which we observe, interact and reflect on the whole child.

Noelle Chandler- Board Secretary- Arts Program Specialist and County Arts Lead with Merced County of Education. She believes in Play Adventures' vision and with her support within the community, she is a vital asset to Play Adventures continual programming and awareness spreading.

Christie Hendricks- Board Treasurer, retired Superintendent for Early Childhood Education for Merced County of Education. Her knowledge and skills of developmentally appropriate practice for young children and her knowledge of the

system is a benefit to play adventures.

Grace Paradis- Professor of Early Childhood development at California State University Stanislaus is mostly interested language development, parent-child relationships, attachment relationships throughout the lifespan, language development (including Deafness) and use in the context of parent-child interactions, influences of media on children, and how current technological trends affect various aspects of development. She has been a staunch advocate for Play Adventures and our unique programming-outdoors, loose parts, and play.

3. Proposed Projects and Scope of Service

Pop Up Community Play Days + Camp

Play Adventures is ready to be of even more support to Merced City families. The pandemic has had a significant effect on us all but has been particularly hard for children's mental health with quarantine and loss of social interactions. Through the Junior Playworking Course, Play Adventures will provide 3-5 Community Pop Up Play Days, enhancing events produced by the city or their partners. In this way, we provide children and youth with a place to "play their way," in a safe and supervised environment accessible to a much larger group of families. The multi-age group at our events allows children the confidence to interact with younger and older children, a rarely-seen benefit. The outdoor setting is a known and researched way to relieve stress. Exhibiting the Play Adventures approach at these events will help raise awareness and create community buy-in to the idea that children need a large allotted time frame to play freely and safely in order to socialize, problem solve and discover their personal interests.

During school breaks, in a predetermined Merced park or parks, Play Adventures will run two partially-subsidized Create Your Own Adventure camps, reaching a larger target children population within Merced and affecting the lives of even more children and families. With this grant we will be able to offer lower costs to the program participants in those camps. During the camp, children will have the opportunity to play with a multi-aged group using loose parts and materials to manipulate with trained, supportive adults as well as teens from our Junior Playwork Course.

Junior Playworker Course: Event Planning, Vocational Skills and Community Outreach.

Play Adventures will advertise, organize and facilitate a new afterschool course being offered to middle schoolers & highschoolers. During the course of the school year, participating Junior Playworkers will learn the playwork approach, while interacting with one another, preschoolers and elementary school aged children. The course will teach

students the theoretical aspects of playwork and then provide opportunities to apply these concepts within our programs. (*The outline of our Junior Playworker Course can be viewed in Addendum B.*)

Once the playwork approach has been practiced in the field (may be used as volunteer hours for High School), we will begin teaching vocational event planning skills in order to produce our Community Pop Up Play Days, discussed above. These events will be led by our Junior Playworkers and supported by our Playworker Team (*see Event Planning Course outline in Addendum C*). There are many benefits to a semi-structured learning/work environment such as the Junior Playworker Course: increased work ethic, additional time management skills, a sense of purpose, CPR and first aid training. It also keeps Junior Playworkers socially interacting in a positive and safe environment, and gives them supportive, community-connected adult role models. In addition, the feeling of giving back to the community empowers youth to take responsibility for their surroundings.

These Community Pop Up Play Days will be free to the community, produced in partnership with an outside organization, and give ALL children the opportunity to self-direct their own play with open-ended materials and supportive teens and adults. These opportunities counteract changes like increased workloads at school, fewer in-school chances for creativity or physical movement, shorter recesses and an overload of adult-led activities. Our children rarely get a chance to investigate their own interests for an uninterrupted time. Large-scale free programming like this is crucial to our children's physical and mental health, and it is crucial that we give interested teens the opportunity to explore it and facilitate it as well.

Logistics:

Junior Playworkers will meet with us twice a week. One day a week will be for workshop-style "learn-by-doing" on-site playwork with time for education, analysis and reflection. (Later in the year, this weekly meeting will turn into time for planning and implementing Community Pop Up Play Days.) During their second weekly Junior Playworking afternoon, they will be doing field work with specific tasks to complete; collectively, we will offer a total of 6 hours per week learning the ways of the playworker and how to plan, initiate and facilitate a series of community events.

We will recruit participants in August/September and work with said participants from September- June. We expect to have anywhere between 2-10 participants. The Junior Playworkers will be paid for their work at the Community Pop Up Play Days they arrange, assuming they are of legal age to receive funds. After the year, if there is a

good fit between Junior Playworkers and the Play Adventures team, we will offer them a part time job to get started on the right track for successful employment.

4. Program Budget

Line item	Description	Total community funding	Total other funding
Pop Up Community Days	3 Community Pop Up Play Days in conjunction with city or partnership events (to be scheduled)	\$3,000	\$5,000
Play Adventures Camps	Play Adventures "Create Your Own Adventure" camps in Merced park(s)	\$10,700	\$7,500
Junior Playworker Course	10-month partially-subsidized course to teach teens the essentials of playwork, event planning and positive employment skills	\$26,000	\$2,000
Total		\$40,000	14,500

See Addendum D for full operation projects budget. Additionally, we run multiple programming with multiple income sources like First Five Mini Grant, Tuition based, Government subsidization from Access and Play Adventures Scholarship Fund. The graph above represents these programs alone.

5. References (Attached separately in Email)

6. Addendums Attached separately in Email

Addendum A: Past and Present experience

Addendum B. Playwork Approach Training

Addendum C. Vocational skills- Event Planning

Addendum D: Full Operational Budget for review

Addendum E: Community Funding Timeline

Addendum A: List of Grants

	Date	Grant received from:	Description	Amount
1	12/3/2018	First Five Merced- Scott Waite-	Series of Pop Ups	\$3000
2	12/6/2018	MCOE- Caring for your Black Children series workshop Samantha Thompson	Child care provision along with AFRO	hired
3	3/2/2019	Parent Institute	Speaker	donated
4	Feb-June, 2019	Merced Parks and Recreation (first five?) Jennifer Arrellano	5 pop ups and pop up series 12 events	\$3000
5	October 5 & 19, 2019	Merced Parks and Recreation Lam Kindavong	Movies in the Park	Hired with symbolic pay
6	October 24, 2019	First Five Community engagement Grant- Lights on Afterschool Xee Lee	Pop up Play Day	1,000
7	November 6, 2019	First Five Community Engagement Grant- library event Alicia Heim	Library Pop Up Child book party	1,000
8	October, 2019	Spanish Heritage Fair- united Way Sol Rivas	Pop UP Play Day	One staff hired \$150
9	November, 2019	Días de la Muertos Celebration MAC Colton Dennis	Pop Up Play Day	donated
10	January, 3, 2020	Merced Parks and Recreation Jennifer Arrellano	2 Camps with subsidized tuition	\$2500
11	Feb 2020	MCOE- Celebrating the African American Child conference Samantha Thompson	Pop Up - child care provision	hired

12	November, 2019	Community District 2 Grant Lee Lor	Series of Pop Up Play Days	3000
13	Summer 2019	MCOE	Assets Workshop	donated
14	March, 2019	Rural Justice Summit at the MAC Joody Marks & Colton Dennis	Pop Up Play day	donated
15	March 20, 2019	Youth to Youth Chis Jenson	Workshop Presenter	donated
16	August 2021	People's Budget, City of Merced	Covid relief funds	\$3000
17	June 2021-2022	First Five Mini Grant Scott Waite	MGM and Scholarship funding	\$10,000
18	November 2021	First Five Covid relief funds	Covid relief	\$3000
19	January, 2022	Arts Now- Noelle Chandler	Advocating for Arts, Workshops, Materials for process art	\$2000
20	May, 22, 22	Mercado- Sarah Herrara	Pop Up Play Day	Hired-symbolic pay
21	January, 2022	California University Stanislaus State- Grace Paradis	Field Work Training for Child Development students in Partnership with California University Stanislaus State.	
	Total			\$32,500

Play Adventures began with the goal of creating a community of free, child-led pop-up opportunities in and around Merced County. We wanted to increase early childhood resources in the area, so we partnered with local organizations and entities to raise community awareness of the importance of children's play as instrumental to learning, socialization, development, and self-discovery. We have collaborated with Merced County of Education; provided activities for children during Week of the Young Child; gave workshops and presentations to ASSETS educators, Parents Institute, and

Youth to Youth; collaborated with Merced Parks and Recreation for multiple events; received grants from First Five, The City of Merced and Merced Parks and Recreation. We have collaborated with UC Merced, Merced College and have provided thousands of children with an opportunity to explore, be inspired, problem solve, self discover, and connect with one another and their environment.

At the onset of COVID19 in 2020, Play Adventures opened a Family Child Care facility that strictly adheres to all State of California and Federal guidelines. The emphasis was on a program that focuses on child-led play while being operated completely outdoors, rain or shine. We received a license to open our program in the backyard of my residence. In this initial offering, 12 children explored their natural tendencies with supportive adults and multiple materials to manipulate based on interests and motivations. In 2021 we became a part of ACCESS, hoping to attract a wider variety of families and provide for a more diverse population. We continue to be an outdoor program hoping to limit the spread of COVID, while promoting the idea that children are capable, curious, part of a culture and the environment. We spend all day outdoors unless the weather does not permit (i.e. heat index, unhealthy AQI levels).

Currently, Play Adventures houses multiple programs that operate throughout the day at different hours, serving different age groups. This home-based operation offers a 'My grown up and Me' program for kids ages 0-5 (subsidized by a First Five Mini Grant), a Forest Preschool Program for kids ages 2-6, and an afterschool program for kids ages 3-10. We offer camps during school breaks, and free workshops for families with kids aged 0-5 with free childcare. We serve approximately 35 families with these various programs. We also recently began working with California State University Stanislaus to provide students with field training experience.

Play Adventures is capable of managing and fulfilling contractual agreements as shown on multiple accounts throughout the 4 years we have been in service with the Merced County community. In Merced County we have collaborated multiple times with various entities to expand knowledge of the importance of play in our community. We have received multiple grants to provide free or subsidized services to the children and families we serve. Our collaborations and grant records are described below:

Addendum B. *Junior Playwork Approach Training*

Adventure Play Philosophy -Four Hour Workshop/Seminar

1. Introduction (15min)
 - a. Names
 - b. Play experience as a child
 - I. Who was there?
 - li. Who wasn't there?
 - lii. Risky or messy play
2. Play -(one hour)
 - a. Play Time
 - I. In the middle of the room there are loose materials- take 15 minutes to play
 - li. chose two observers to take notes of what they see. What play types did they see, was there an outcome, an obvious start middle and end....
 - lii. (Plant five kids to come and play- those who will do it naturally/not do it) - then discuss what happens when a child doesn't have this opportunity
 - b. Discuss play in today's world- What happens when they don't get self directed play?
 - I. facilitated (directed and supervised)
 - li. in front of screens
 - lii. amount of play/no recess
 - liii. nature deprived
 - liiii. Lack of Peer learning
 - liiiii. Lack of Multiple age playing
 - liiiiii. Lack of exploration
 - c. Discuss Play Types- Bob Hughes
 - d. Define Play- in small groups of 3 in one to two sentences.
 - I. Listen to definitions
 - li. Give playworkers definition.

BREAK
3. Playwork Principles- (30min)
 - a. Pages 4-10 in Reflective playwork work well to get the message across
 - I. Hand out playwork principles- discuss what they mean and then using the stories show how they are implemented
 - ii . Stories from Fraser Brown's book, show how playwork principles are implemented.
 - lii. ask them to tell a play experience and then implement playwork principles
 - b. Differences of play through a teacher's lens and through a playworker lens
 - I. Show clip of children playing and interpret it in both ways
 - li. Show diagram of differences- one would do this, one would do that-

(this might be hard and perceived as judgemental- need to think on how to do this...)

4. Play Environments (30)
 - a. Choose a play environment and describe it/sketch it
 - b. What types of play types does it allow?
 - c. How would you change the environment to allow more play opportunities?
 - d. Show regular playgrounds (slide from Morgans with the prison) vs adventure playgrounds or playscapes. Evaluate the different play opportunities possible.
5. Loose Parts (30)
 - a. What is loose parts theory?
 - b. Why is it beneficial to children?
 - c. Split up into small groups and make together a list of loose parts that can be incorporated in your play environment. We write them together creating a master list.
6. Importance of Risky Play (30)
 - a. Risk/Benefit Assessment
 - b. Rough housing
 - c. Climbing
 - d. Fire
7. Play Cycles and Intervention (30)
 - a. The different play cycles- look at play experiences and show when play terms are being used..framing, cues etc
 - b. Levels of intervention
 - c. Problematic behavior
8. Reflective Practice (15)
 - a. The difference between reflection with playworking and regular reflections
 - b. The importance of reflection
9. Summary and Feedback/Reflection
 - a. Questionnaire or open ended questions for feedback

Addendum C. ***Vocational skills- Event Planning***

1. Brainstorm the event
 - a. What is the event? How will it look? What Marketing needs to be done?
 - b. Where will the event take place?
 - c. When will the event take place?
 - d. Who is sponsoring the event? Who is participating in the event
 - e. How will it work logistically?
 - i. What Materials?
 - ii. How will the materials get there?
 - iii. Who is staffing the event?
 - iv. Where can we unload materials?
 - v. Creating a contingency plan!
 - vi. What marketing materials need to be there?
 - vii. What signage?
 - f. Why are we doing this?
 - i. For the children in the community
 - ii. Raise awareness about self directed play to the community
 - iii. Marketing for Play Adventures programs
 - iv. In field training for Junior Playworkers
2. What are criteria for a successful event?
3. Plan 5 Community Pop Up Play Days- using what was learned above
4. Organize 5 schools for individual or series of Pop Up Play Days
5. Implement Pop Up Play Days

Addendum D Operational Programs Budget

Jr Playwork Course

Expenses	Planning	Weekly Course hours per month (theory and field work)	Months/times	Rate	Amount of playworkers	Rate	Amount of Jr playworkers	Total
Personnel Break Down								
Curriculum Building	15		1	30	2			900
Marketing cost analysis, & implementation	15			30	1			450
Securing Jr Playworkers	15			30	2			900
Program Start		25	10	25	1			6300
Implementation of Community Pop Ups		4	10	25	2	15	2	1004
Total Personnel Expenses								9554
	Material costs	Per month	Per event					
Material Expenses								
Materials	250	10	2					5000
Total Material Costs								5000
	Unit Cost	per month	amt of months					
Over head Expenses								
Vehicle (60 cents per mile-ten miles)	6	1	10	60				
Office supplies/marketing supplies (225\$/1000 flyers)	0.23	200	10	450				
Utilities		100	10	1000				
Uniform (25 shirts, 20 Staff+ Jr Playworkers)	25		20	500				
Snacks	20	8	10	1600				
Accounting (partial cost of accounting for program)	20	1	10	200				
CPR and First Aid Training (10 kids)	35		10	350				
Program cost	200		10	2000				
Pop Up cost	500		10	5000				
Total Overhead Expenses				11160				11160
Total Gross Expenses								\$25,714
Unexpected 2% of total expenses								\$502
								\$26,216

Community Pop Up Play Days

Expenses	Staff	Materials	Event	Total	amount of event	Total
Planning and implementation			350			
Rate	25	200				
Staff per event	3					
Hours (Set Up, Event & Cle	6				3	
Total	450	200	350	1000		3000

Play Adventures Camps

Personnel Break Down	amt of people	rate	hours per day	hours per week	Total	
Marketing	1		30	10	300	
Playworker	4		25	8	4000	Staff 8-4 Camp runs 9-3
Jr. Playworker	2		15	5	750	
Amount of Camps	2				5050	
Total personnel expenses					10100	

Materials	rate	amount					
Each camp	300	2			600		
Total Materials					600		
					10700		
Total Expenses for Camps and Pop Ups					13700		
Total Expenses requesting							\$39,916
Income							
	Jr Playwork Income	Pop Up Income	Camp Income				
Rate per month (per camp)	10	0	150				
amount of children	10	~20-50	10				
per year (10 months)	10	5	2				
Total	1000	0	3000				



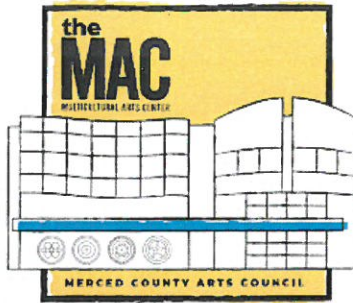
Addendum E Community Funding Timeline

Item	Goal	Description	Action items	timeline
Curriculum Building(10-15 hours)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach an Interactive course to youth for understanding and knowledge through the lens of the child. 2. Offer vocational event planning skills 3. Implement Community events 	Our Play Team creates a course filled with knowledge and experiential learning. The course has a curriculum that is geared to implement flexibility. We encourage the children to take the lead and support their lead, no matter the outcome. This course is true learning through trial and error as making mistakes is part of the learning experience.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dive deep into the outline by creating the curriculum fully. 2. Pilot on a few children that have previously been in our programs. 3. Advertise program to High School students, Youth Council and other organizations representing youth 4. Create Calendar 	Beginning August 2022
Marketing (10 hrs including prepping materials, cost analysis, & implementing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create Marketing materials offering the course training. 2. Introduce the program to Youth organizations, schools & parents. 3. Market the program with easy registration options 	Our Play Team will market through social media, signage, email marketing through connections with influencers/services, youth organizations and Peach Jar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List possible connections or parties of interest. 2. Reach out to High Schools and the youth council. 3. Propose Play Adventures' Junior Playwork Community Program 	Late August-September 2022
Securing (15hours) Applicants/participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure registration of 6-10 applicants in 2022-2023 pilot year. 	Our Team will pursue registration of Middle School and High School Students through city youth council and related professionals and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gain Information regarding how middle and high school students pursue after school activities and/or volunteering options. 	September



		organizations	2. Contact liaisons in MCSD for student affairs	
Program Start (8 hours*rate *10months)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin Playwork Theoretical and Field work training simultaneously to learn directly from doing. 2. Introduce Junior Playworkers to the career of child education. 	<p>The Jr Playworkers will begin learning the ins and outs of Playwork while experiencing through observation and reflection practice. Later the Jr Playowrkers will take an active part in supporting the children based on the playwork approach.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an agreement with the participants about the scope of work. 2. Begin Training 	October 2022
Field work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage experiential learning. 2. Empowering the youth to lead with their ideas. The Jr. Playworkers will learn through trial and error methods. 	<p>Experiential learning is the key to deep, successful education. The Jr Playworkers will learn to see younger children in a different light, support children and their play, learn to reflect in the playwork manner and have a good time being outdoors in a safe supportive environment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the field work with journaling and daily reflection practice. 2. Discuss issues that may occur and allow personal and group problem solving. 3. Become a community of Junior Playworkers that are passionate about childhood. 	November 2022
Implementation of Community Pop Ups 10 pop ups* 4 hours each*2 Jr playworkers, 2 Playworkers*rate)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and Teach event planning and community building 2. Implement Community Pop Up Play Days and in-school Pop Up Play Days 	<p>The experiential learning, theoretical learning, building the Junior Playwork Community and implementing programming for the whole community is a lifelong positive experience.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning and executing the Pop Up Community Play Opportunities 	January 2023-June 2023





To Whom It May Concern,

I am always happy to supply testimony and reference on behalf of Naomi Sukenik of Play Adventures, Merced! It's a wonderful day whenever she comes to work with our clientele.

Prior to COVID-19 and the mass shutdown of public spaces (wherein the Multicultural Arts Center was closed to the public for almost a year), Naomi participated in unique ways at several of our popular community events. She is uniquely capable of bringing a truck full of loose parts into a space (or, in our case, a small gallery) and transforming said space into an intuitive, creatively-designed, welcome adventure playground. Watching children navigate the terrain indoors at the MAC was particularly delightful, since students so rarely get to participate in totally self-directed play in a space usually reserved for a technique practice or the showcasing of art. It gave us all a different sense of how the space could be used, as well as, I think, an obligation to continue thinking outside the box on behalf of our community's kids.

Naomi is always welcome in our building, and now that we are moving out of the COVID-19 space I hope to work with her again, and soon!

Respectfully,

Colton Dennis
Executive Director, Merced County Arts Council
209.388.1090
director@artsmerced.org
www.artsmerced.org



Noelle D.W. Chandler

Arts Program Specialist

209.386.6047

632 W. 13th Street
Merced, CA 95341

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in reference to Naomi Sukenik of Play Adventures, who put forward time and attention this year into establishing an additional Arts Now Community at the Play Adventures Clubhouse, specifically for the benefit of her (and all) students.

After Arts Now MCOE (a County-Wide arts community through Create CA, a stateward arts advocacy partner) was established in 2021, I began searching for leaders interested in bringing the benefits of a process-based arts opportunity to their students while obtaining additional professional development in the arts, advocacy and community-building for themselves. With the establishment of an Arts Now Community comes a grant for funding in the amount of \$1,500; she developed a series of workshops offered to the community with free childcare at her Clubhouse location and was a wise steward of the funding offered to her by Create CA. Naomi's workshops were well-facilitated and well-advertised, and parents who attended walked away with a new appreciation for the Playwork philosophy and how it interweaves with creativity and art.

Naomi was the ideal first establishment of an Arts Now Community additional-to and umbrella-ed by my own at the County level. I am proud to work with such a fierce advocate for children and brilliant, innovative educator.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with additional questions.

Sincerely,

Noelle D.W. Chandler, Arts Program Specialist

Merced County Office of Education

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www.mcoe.org/arts

SAMANTHA C. THOMPSON, MBA

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July 1, 2022

RE: Naomi Sukenik & Play Adventures

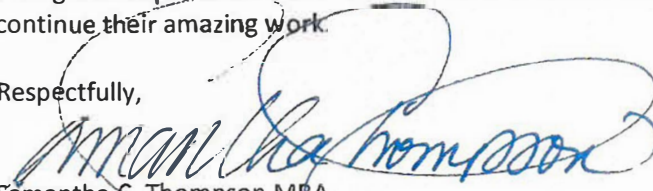
To Whom It May Concern:

I met Naomi Sukenik in 2017-18 when she relocated to the Merced County community. At the time, I was the Early Education Program Manager with the Merced County Office of Education. I was immediately impressed with Naomi's eagerness to engage with the early learning community and the passion she shared about Play Adventures. She demonstrated expert knowledge in early learning and care and a commitment to play-based experiential learning, which Play Adventures has become known for in the community.

As a result of our initial interactions, I was motivated to contract with her to offer an innovative option of child care as part of a series of parenting classes for a grant I was overseeing from 2017-2020, "Caring for Our Black Children" funded by First 5 Merced County. Naomi demonstrated a high degree of cultural competence and was attentive to integrating culturally responsive practices and activities that celebrated Black culture, into the Play Adventures model. Subsequently, we invited her to provide child care during our day-long conference, "Celebrating the African American Child" in February 2020. Participants who utilized the care during the conference provided highly favorable feedback regarding their child's experience. I remember one parent being extremely appreciative to the strategies Naomi suggested to support the curiosity in her child with special needs.

Not only is Naomi Sukenik, an educated and knowledgeable early education professional and business owner, she is a kind and considerate person. She has a disposition that makes it easy for children and adults to connect with her which I believe is instrumental in her success. As I have transitioned away from the Merced County Office of Education, Early Education Department to a statewide advocacy position focusing on early learning and care policy for the Education Trust West, I remain a Merced County resident and I have continued to see Play Adventures thrive and grow in the community. It is with great respect and honor to recommend Naomi Sukenik and Play Adventures for grant funding to continue their amazing work.

Respectfully,



Samantha C. Thompson MBA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • MERCED • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

DANIELLE WAITE, Ed.D.
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July 1, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter of recommendation for Naomi Sukenik and her program Play Adventures.

We hired Play Adventures to provide activities for our 10th Anniversary celebration of our program. We serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers daily, but at this event we knew we'd also have school aged siblings and alumni attending. Ms. Sukenik provided a play space and opportunities for children (and some parents) to explore and create. Our university is very much on reduction of waste, as is our early education program. We re-use discarded items in all our daily classroom activities and it was a natural fit to hire Play Adventures to provide added interactive activities for the families attending our anniversary event.

Ms. Sukenik also presented at our last Symposium of Children and Families (2020) to early child professionals and other interested individuals who work with young children and families. Her talk on Playwork and her program Adventure Playgrounds was excellent and informative. She clearly relayed theory and studies around risk taking in young children. She gave many anecdotal stories from her own experiences in her pop-up program and her program prior to moving to California.

Her program is based on the need to allow children to be children, to take risks, and be creative. Child play has been changed over these past many decades and it's wonderful that she is encouraging children to be problem solvers, negotiators, inventors, and creators.

If you need any more information that I did not share here, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

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