

What a child wants isn't always what he should get

By Celia Saxon
Staff Reporter

Rachael Smedly, Linda Campbell and Genieve Lippe are making Santa for Easy-Bake Ovens because the man on television said you can make real cakes just like mommy does.

The three and four-year olds could hardly tear themselves away from their wide variety of educational toys in the Maple Nursery School at Cedarvale Community Centre. There they were all wrapped up in learning about sizes, shapes, color coordination and counting, and imagining all the fun they are going to have with a TV-

advertised toy that will lose its appeal before the pine needles fall off the Christmas tree. Why? Because three and four-year-olds don't know that playthings have to meet certain requirements to keep them amused for long periods. They don't know that toys help them learn about themselves, each other and the world they live in. Play is their work and toys are their tools.

"A toy should be 90 percent child and ten percent toy," says nursery school supervisor, Anne Burns. "It must be imaginative and challenging. It must allow the child to discover and explore. A plaything should educate and stimulate as well as entertain, and it should continue to be fun."

Canadians spend over 200 million dollars a year on toys. Parents are bombarded with children's products in supermarkets, drug stores, department stores, boutiques, toy shops, magazines, catalogues and TV commercials. Some toys appeal to the parents more than to the children. Mechanical toys are lots of fun for dad, but after the novelty wears off there isn't much left for junior except to take it apart and see what makes it tick. Often the child has more fun with the box it came in. Parents end up disappointed after spending a lot of money on something their young ones don't appreciate.

"Because I work with children and toys, and because I know the child, parents will often ask me what I recommend," said Mrs. Burns. "I advise toys that stimulate imagination, makes them think, and allows them to construct. Also it must fit into their immediate world. Ask yourself: Does it work? Is it the right size and age for the child? Will it last? Is it in season? Will the novelty wear off? Can accessories and additional units be added later? Will it break too easily? Will it frustrate and bore the child or will it continue to be fun?"

"Lego is a very popular set with the nursery school children, because it won't break. They can build cars, airplanes, boats, buildings and then take it all apart and build something else."

Mrs. Burns says Fisher-Price toys never lose their appeal and never wear out. For years she has been adding new toys to the supply at the school. Each year they come up with new materials and new designs but the basic concept is always the same.

All the games and building sets are kept in colorful plastic dishpans on slotted shelves. "I always suggest to parents that shelves like this would be an ideal gift for a child. Toy boxes are useless, because they just mix everything up. This way everything is kept separate and the dishpans are big enough they can play with the game right in the pan."

She tells parents children will usually ask for relevant toys. Shawn Collison wants a fire truck for Christmas because "a fireman came here and we went to the fire hall." Jeffrey Gustinis wants Lego because he plays with a set at nursery school. Shannon Salter wants a two-wheeler because "the other kids got one." Genieve Lippe is asking Santa for a anoozy tooth brush because "the battery don't wears out when you leaves it in the plug."

Christopher Gawley wants red presents. Besides his "putt putt" train he doesn't care what's in them as long as they're red.

But David Mourey isn't giving away any secrets. "Santa knows what I want."



TWO-YEAR-OLD LEANNE Baines couldn't wait for Christmas to play with the popular Sesame Street puppets. She just plunked herself right down in the middle of the aisle at Canadian Tire and enjoyed

herself there while Mom and Dad did the shopping. Manager Jim Hancock says this year they have stocked a large variety of toys but try to stick to name brands and popular sellers.



THE HOTTEST ITEM on the toy market this Christmas is Evil Knievel and his "amazing action super stunt cycle" that jumps, wheelies, races at top speed and shoots over a Scramble Van, an accessory for transporting the hero's equipment. Carol Eros, 4 and Janice Lesley, 4 tell Canadian Tire manager, Jim Hancock they would like Santa to bring their brothers one for Christmas.



DOLLS THAT WALK, talk, wet, sleep, ride tricycles and dress up in dozens of outfits are all lined up at Zellers waiting for Santa to deliver them to pretty little girls like Colleen Cannon. Mrs. Pat Bell, toy department supervisor, helps Colleen decide which one is best. "I want one what talks," she said.

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