

Full-Day Kindergarten

The Power of Play-Based Learning

Play is how children make sense of the world. Much of children's learning takes place through play. Play is so important in the lives of children that it has been recognized by the United Nations as a specific right.

Young children don't see a difference between play and school work or between learning and doing. Play engages children's attention when it offers a challenge that is within the child's capacity to master.

Through play, children learn about the world around them and share their responses in various ways – for example, they represent in dramatic play what they have learned from personal experiences or from stories that they have heard. When children play with blocks, sand, or water, they are learning problem-solving skills and basic math and science concepts. Children make their learning visible in different ways—in their drawings and paintings, in the creation of objects, through the structures they build, through dramatization and in their writing.

The educator team provides large blocks of time for play, stimulating children's learning through their intentional choice of materials, and asks questions that help the children explore ideas through play. The team documents the children's learning using photos and/or video clips. They also write down the children's dictated stories and record their conversations and behaviours.

When children are learning through play you might see them:

- making choices, sharing materials, trying new things;
- noticing letters on signs and using letters and words to make signs;
- Labelling their drawings and writing simple stories
- filling a container with sand or water, pouring it out, measuring it, counting the number of scoops, comparing;
- arranging, stacking, and building with blocks of different sizes and shapes;
- cutting paper, drawing, painting, creating an animal with modelling clay;
- running, jumping, throwing, catching, hopping, skipping.

... or you might hear them:

- talking, sharing ideas, discussing something with each other and with adults;
- wondering aloud, questioning, using new vocabulary;
- explaining, suggesting, planning

"Play is often talked about as if it is a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."

Fred Rogers/Mr. Dress Up



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Effective ways in which parents can support children's learning through play:

Some sample ideas:

At home:

- have children help to match up the family's socks when laundry is being done. This helps to develop the concept of 1-to-1 correspondence and the skill of sorting.
- provide a variety of "found" materials (e.g., plastic food containers, small boxes, etc.) with which children can design, create, and build. Materials that can be used in a variety of ways encourage children's creativity and imagination.

In the community:

- look for shapes and patterns in natural objects (e.g., the round-ness of a puddle) and built objects (e.g., the repeating pattern of boards in a fence) when walking to and from school. The ability to recognize shapes and patterns in their world reinforces the idea that mathematics is part of everyday life.

Parents are encouraged to share observations or information about their child with the educator team.

Parents as partners in learning:

Ask the educator team

- What are the children learning at the blocks, sand, and water centres? How are you addressing the expectations from the Kindergarten document in your play-based program?
- How do you decide what materials to put out for the children to play with? Do these materials stay the same all the time or do they change?
- With what is my child interested in playing?

Ask a child

- What learning areas did you visit or play at today? What did you do at the block, sand or water centre?
- What did you play with when you were outside (e.g., the tricycle, wagon, hand lens, digital camera)? Why did you choose to play with that?
- What learning area is your favourite? Why? Which learning area haven't you been to yet? Why?

Learn more

For a list of resources, visit

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html>

Or call:

Toll-free in Ontario,

1-800-387-5514

From Toronto and from outside Ontario,

(416) 325-2929

TDD/TTY

This toll-free number provides accessible information for the hearing-impaired, in both English and French languages

1-800-263-2892

Talking With Children

Learning through play is supported when adults engage in the play, and listen and respond to what children say. Talk helps children to shape and articulate their thoughts and reinforces oral language.

Adults can elicit talk by:

- *asking questions ("How did you make that work?")*
- *noticing their learning ("I see that you figured out how to make your bridge go over your road.")*

By providing ample time for children to respond, adults demonstrate respect for the children's thoughts, opinions, ideas and wonderings.

