



Preschool Connection

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Learning Through Play

"With growing academic expectations being placed on young children each year, it's easy to forget how critical play is to their social, emotional, and cognitive growth. In fact, research has shown that playtime provides experiences that promote the underlying skills necessary for your child's learning in school and beyond, such as improved memory, oral-language ability, and deeper engagement in literacy activities. In playing children are planning, role-playing, and using verbal interactions."¹

"Children learn

naturally to share and to solve problems through play. Make-believe games can help them develop their curiosity and problem solving skills. They can empathize with others and act out their own feelings and worries "²

"Most of us have some happy memories of our childhood. They are usually memories of doing something with our family or of playing. When life crowds in on us, we can go back to those memories for some relief. We often have favorite songs, poems and stories that bring back memories of doing

and playing."²

In addition to having an overall effect on the quality and duration of play, learning to use appropriate strategies in play supports the development of self-regulation, a universal pre-requisite for any academic learning. For children, self-regulation means being able to regulate their thinking and their emotions. Instead of just blurting out the first thing they think of, they consider several possibilities. Rather than get mad when it is "not my turn," a child thinks, "It will be my turn next."¹



When your child negotiates his role or corrects a playmate whose actions do not fit the role he is playing, he learns how to delay gratification and take necessary actions for sustaining play."¹

"When preschoolers play, they take the initiative — choosing where they want to play, coming up with ideas, and trying them out. However, this doesn't mean that their parents and teachers do nothing but move around and watch. Rather, adults have an important role in helping children learn through play"¹.

"Adults can set the stage for children's learning by selecting materials they know will engage preschoolers and organizing them effectively in interest areas. They provide guidance if children need help and ask questions to spark children's thinking while allowing and encouraging them to experience the power of feeling in charge of their own learning. In any one play period, your child might choose to work on a puzzle, build a block tower, look through a familiar book and retell the story, or play a game with a friend. When she's free to follow her interests, learning happens naturally."¹

"For example, take playing with blocks.

When your child:

- Balances one large block on top of another... he's learning to control and coordinate small muscles.
- Places blocks of the same size together ... she's learning to classify and sort objects by size, shape, and function.
- Experiments to see how high he can stack

blocks until the pile falls ... he's learning to predict cause-and effect relationships.

- Judge how many blocks are needed to fill a space ... he's learning to estimate and use addition and subtraction."¹

"By using an object to stand in for something else (colored play dough molded into a cupcake), children learn symbolic representation, which is the ability to separate the function of an object from the object itself ((you can stir "soup" with a pencil). This is a precursor to more advanced symbolic thinking such as understanding how a written word can represent a spoken word."¹

"As we learn more about how young children learn, it is becoming increasingly obvious that you do not need to sacrifice play in order to fulfill academic requirements. On the contrary, by supporting mature, high-quality play, you will be helping your child on the road to fully developing his language and literacy skills."¹

"Let your children collect their own special memories by letting them play and by playing with them."²

1. "Playing to Learn". www.scholastic.com/earlylearner

2. [Growing Together Newsletter for parents of preschool children](#). Vol. 22 No. 1. "Childhood learning doesn't always mean book learning." Publisher: Growing Child, Inc. Lafayette, IN. Jan. 2006.

These activities are not a test to see whether your child knows the skills. If your child has trouble, give enough hints so that he or she can be successful. If the activity is too difficult or becomes frustrating, stop that activity and do something else that is fun. The main goal is to spend quality time with your child each day and to help your child be successful!

1 Activities which encourage accuracy in observation.

“What will happen if we drop this ball on the floor?”

“What will happen if we set this little truck on the top of this slope?”

4 Activities which call for theory.

“What would happen if we mixed this green paint with this yellow paint?”

“If we let all the water out of the bathtub where would the boat go?”

2 Activities which require organization

“How many things can you name that can fly?”

. things that walk?

. things that are green?

5 Activities which provoke imagination

Begin a story and let your child make up an ending.

Or ask: “What are some of the things we could make with this ball of clay?”

3 Activities which encourage sensitivity to the environment.

“Can you act like one of these - a dog? A bunny? A Lion?”

“Pretend you are a bus driver (doctor, farmer, firefighter”.

6 Activities to promote flexibility.

Give your child some shapes (triangles, rectangles, semicircles, etc.) that you have cut out of paper and ask her to make as many things as she can from them.

Please take a moment each month fill out the brief questionnaire that we have included. Since this is the first year we have attempted this, we would like to know how helpful (or not) these newsletters have been for you, and how we can improve them for future years.

Please complete and return to your preschool teacher.

October 2006 Newsletter:

The information in this newsletter was (check one):

Informative. The right amount of information

Too brief

Too long

Not helpful

Other: _____

The activities were:

Helpful Activities you liked best (which numbers) _____

Not useful Activities you like least _____

The right amount of activities?

Comments: _____
