
Teacher Pages



Reflections

What was your favorite toy when you were a child?

Are you a playful person?

Do you support play by providing open-ended play experiences?

Is your classroom play environment inviting to all children?

Do you encourage children to play with toys in a variety of ways?



Play Power

We often hear that play is a child's work, or we hear the phrase "The power of play." But what do those words really mean? And how can teachers make sure children get plenty of playtime to optimize development during the early years?



According to prominent researchers, play has five elements: It must be pleasurable, have no extrinsic goals, be spontaneous and voluntary, involve active engagement on the part of the player, and contain an element of make-believe. Children are wired from birth to play. The good news is, play is universal. All kids know how to do it!

It is through play that children:

- build pre-academic skills
- learn to solve problems
- satisfy their curiosity
- develop a love for art and music
- learn to get along with others
- develop large and small muscles
- develop creativity and imagination
- learn to make sense of the world
- build mastery and self-confidence
- have fun

Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, drawing on his 25 years of research—including studies with the Harvard Preschool Project and the state of Missouri's New Parents as Teachers Project—stresses the importance of children "learning how

to learn." He says, "As they indulge their natural inclinations to explore, investigate, and experiment through developmentally appropriate play, they acquire the fundamental concepts and capacities that allow them to effectively absorb from and adapt to the ever changing environment around them for the rest of their lives."

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