



What educators know

Children in kindergarten classrooms engage in play-based learning that can be self-directed or guided by the educator. Teachers and early childhood educators use their understanding of the many ways that children learn to design play-based learning opportunities. Educators:

- create environments rich with materials and possibilities
- observe children closely to understand their thinking
- extend learning during play with intention
- encourage collaboration, curiosity, and independence

A play-based classroom is full of creativity, conversation, and wonder!

Your role in play

When you see children playing:

- ask what they are working on
- listen to their ideas
- join the play thoughtfully
- notice and name the thinking behind their actions
- celebrate their efforts

Through these playful moments, you'll see how deeply they are learning.

Play makes learning fun and effective and activates the curiosity and engagement that are essential for long term academic success.



Playing is Learning



“**Children learn best when they are actively engaged, curious, and supported in their exploration.**”

Angela Pyle,
director of the Play Learning Lab at the
University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for
Studies in Education



Play is the foundation of how children explore, communicate, and understand the world. When children play, they are not “taking a break” from learning – they’re actively building the skills that will support them in becoming more engaged, confident, and positive about learning.

The research is clear: children learn deeply when they play.

Why play matters

- Play helps children build the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical skills they need for success in school and life.
- Through play, children learn to think creatively, collaborate with others, and approach challenges with confidence.
- High quality play experiences support language development and early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Play creates opportunities for children to communicate, which is especially beneficial for those with diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- Children learn best when they are active participants.



What play supports

- **Language and communication** – expressing ideas, negotiating roles, sharing stories
- **Social development** – making friends, co-operating, understanding others
- **Cognitive growth** – experimenting, problem solving, discovering patterns
- **Emotional well being** – developing confidence, resilience, self expression
- **Creativity** – imagining possibilities, inventing solutions
- **Inclusion** – accessible learning for diverse needs and backgrounds

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Play provides opportunities for children to explore ideas, take risks, and imagine new possibilities.”

Purposeful Play: A Teacher’s Guide to Igniting Deep and Joyful Learning Across the Day

How children learn

- **Pretending** – trying on roles, empathizing, imagining new worlds
- **Building** – testing ideas, revising plans, problem-solving
- **Exploring** – asking questions, making connections, synthesizing new learning
- **Experimenting** – trying, revising, trying again
- **Expressing** – drawing, storytelling, acting, creating
- **Collaborating** – communicating, planning, negotiating

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When children are in environments where learning is occurring in a meaningful context, where they have choice, and where they are encouraged to follow their interest, learning takes place best.”

Play = Learning: How Play Motivates and Enhances Children’s Cognitive and Social-Emotional Growth

