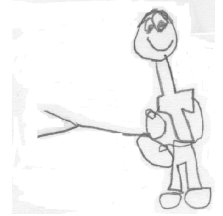


Play and Playful Learning



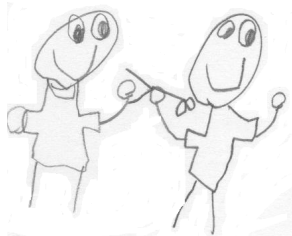
Everything we do in Kindergarten has to be playful. The only way to capture the interest of a large group of young children, and keep them engaged – is to make it fun. We use a multitude of materials such as puppets, songs, projects, games, poems, stories, and lots of laughter to help children build connections and construct learning. But not everything we do is actual play, much of what we do in school is really playful learning.

In playful learning the teacher has a specific objective and she designs experiences to meet that goal. She models, supports and encourages the children in order to meet her objective, but she tries to make it fun and enjoyable as well.

True play must be child initiated, child directed and child controlled. It is often multisensory, interactive, and joyful. It usually involves communicating ideas. The adult's job is to provide specific materials and set up the environment to promote learning. The adult's role is to facilitate the experience – interacting, asking questions, encouraging children to construct new ideas or reinforce prior learning; but without taking control of the activity.

Adults must provide emotional support for play by:

- allowing time, space and materials
- interacting with children during play – describing, assisting, taking a role, asking questions, not directing or interrupting
- listening to children – letting them control conversations
- observing children and stepping in only when needed



We can promote literacy during play by providing reading and writing materials such as menus for play restaurants, and labeling block constructions. It's also important to let children see us reading and writing for real reasons. Another powerful strategy to encourage literacy learning is to find opportunities to point out print in the world around us: food packages, store names, traffic signs, etc. Then we can encourage the children to incorporate this type of print into their play.

Both play and playful learning are important parts of kindergarten. Each school day is a careful balance, allowing lots of time for both types of experiences. Often activities that begin as teacher directed, playful experiences are later incorporated by the children into their play. But the best way to turn play into a significant literacy tool is by actively participating with the children.

