

PLAY-BASED LEARNING

Playing is ...

"Play is the highest level of child development...It gives...joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world...The plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of all later life." Friedrich Froebel

What is play-based learning?

Play-based learning allows children to understand their social environment through interactions with people, objects, and symbols. It is creative and self-directed. Play can be categorized as:

- **"Onlooker behavior"** – Playing passively by watching or conversing with other children engaged in play activities.
- **Solitary independent** – Playing by oneself.
- **Parallel** – Playing, even in the middle of a group, while remaining engrossed in one's own activity. Children playing parallel to each other sometimes use each other's toys, but always maintain their independence.
- **Associative** – When children share materials and talk to each other, but do not coordinate play objectives or interests.
- **Cooperative** – When children organize themselves into roles with specific goals in mind (e.g., to assign the roles of doctor, nurse, and patient and play hospital)."

What is the role of the educator?

Educators provide various settings and open-ended activities, which allow students to explore, make inquiries, and develop their creativity. Learning centres are carefully planned to address 6 specific Ontario curriculum expectations: Personal Social, Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Health and Physical Education, and the Arts. Educators model behaviours, observe and interact with students, keeping in mind that it is the children who are the decision-makers during play.



PLAY-BASED KINDERGARTEN

What are the benefits?

Through play children develop:

- Critical thinking skills
- Creativity
- Improved social skills
- A sense of community and security
- A sense of self and others
- Self-regulation, self-motivation and self confidence
- Fine motor and gross motor skills
- Symbolic competence required for formal learning
- Improved language fluency
- Increased brain pathways
- A love for learning



The Importance of Play in School

“Although play is a difficult concept to define, it is very easy to recognize. Children actively involved in play may be engaged in a variety of activities, independently, with a partner, or in a group. Because play is closely tied to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor development of young children, it is an important part of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs.”

-Earlychildhood NEWS, 2008

