



Family Share

Monroe County Head Start
Early Childhood Development



Playing is Learning

Young children learn best by *doing*. Unlike adults who are able to learn from memorizing facts, young children learn about the world around them by *using their senses*—by seeing, touching, tasting, smelling and hearing. Preschool children discover *for themselves* how things work by *experimenting*, using their imaginations and their bodies, as well as by interacting with others.

Through play, children acquire important mental, physical, and social skills which prepare them for later learning.

What Children Learn Through Play

Reading Books:

- * words to communicate
- * following a sequence of events
- * how written information is read
- * how writing represents language
- * understanding of cause and effect
- * enjoyment of stories and illustrations



Blocks, Puzzles, and Small Toys:

- * how to control and use small muscles
- * how to sort, classify, match and compare
- * balancing objects and creating structures
- * counting, and number concepts
- * results of cause and effect



Arts and Crafts:

- * using imagination
- * control of small muscles
- * words to describe things
- * colors, shapes and textures
- * creating from ideas and emotions



Pretend Play:

- * solving problems
- * uses for imagination
- * practicing language
- * how to get along with others
- * how to express emotions and ideas
- * understanding others by playing roles



Physical Play:

- * taking risks
- * hand-eye/foot coordination
- * how to cooperate, take turns
- * overall balance and coordination
- * using and strengthening large muscles



Music and Movement:

- * memorizing words
- * expressing emotions
- * balance and coordination
- * participating in group activities
- * enjoyment of rhythm and sound
- * body awareness and physical abilities



Types of Play

EXPLORATORY PLAY

Children learn about themselves and their world by using their senses and using their whole bodies to get involved in the things and the people in their environment.

To encourage exploratory play use:

balls, sand and water play, pull and push toys, paints, clay, and safe things to climb on.

Provide home activities such as:

- Playing in the sink with soap bubbles and plastic containers for filling and pouring.
- Finger painting with soap suds on the sides of the bath tub while bathing.
- Wooden spoons and containers (coffee cans, cereal boxes or aluminum pie pans) to use as a drum or musical instrument.
- Large cartons that become toys for climbing in and out, getting over, or pushing around.

MANIPULATIVE PLAY:

When children play with objects they make them change and move. When they do this they are learning to gain control over their hand muscles and learning how their eyes and their muscles can work together. They also learn about size, how things fit in specific size spaces, and how things can go in order.

To encourage manipulative play use:

blocks, puzzles, peg boards, play dough, crayons, beads, lacing cards, and toys that connect or fit together.

Provide home activities such as:

- individual cereal boxes for stacking.
- different empty containers with smooth edges that can be nested (fit inside of one another).
- a shoe box or coffee can with a slot in the top through which the child can put large buttons, playing cards, or other objects.
- large buttons or empty thread spools with yarn or a shoe lace for stringing.

When I Play...

When I PLAY WITH PUZZLES, I am learning:

Eye hand coordination. Concepts of shape, size, color, and location. About the relationship of parts to the whole, (a basic math concept). About positive and negative space (math and reading concepts). Problem solving. Sorting. Independence.

When I PLAY ON RIDING TOYS I am learning:

Strength, balance, and coordination of large muscles. To use my energy in a constructive way. Concepts of speed, direction, and location. To use my imagination as I pretend to be different characters and make noises. To negotiate and take turns. To solve problems.

When I HELP YOU COOK I am learning:

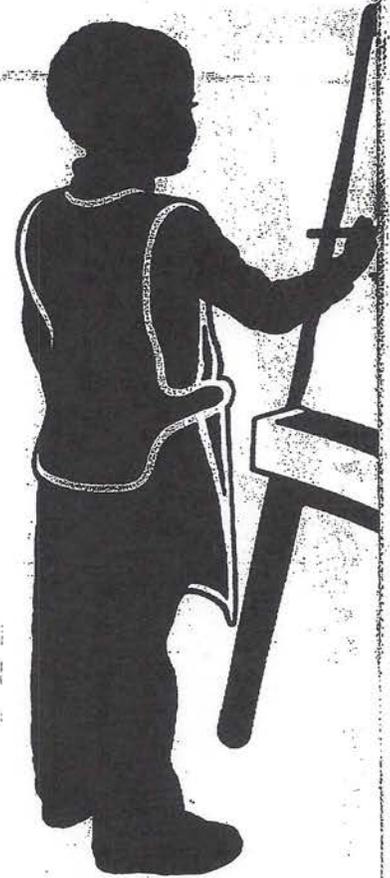
About nutrition, tastes, and food groups. How heat and cold change things. Concepts of volume and measurement. Part-whole relationships (basic math concepts). Vocabulary.

When I HEAR STORY BOOKS I am learning:

That learning to read is important and enjoyable. That letters on a page represent words. The meanings of more and more words. To express my own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. To exercise my own imagination. To listen well to the spoken language. To make up my own stories. To handle books with care. To value the beauty of well done illustrations. To recognize certain words when I see them in print. To use more complex language patterns in my own speech. To follow the development of thoughts and ideas in the plot of a story.

When I PLAY WITH WATER I am learning:

That some things sink and some things float. To observe changes as water takes different forms in different containers. About wet, dry, and evaporation. What happens when you add soap. Eye-hand coordination. Concepts of empty and full, volume and weight, (math concepts).



I am Learning...

When I SCRIBBLE AND DRAW I am learning:

To hold a pencil or crayon and to control the pressure. Eye hand coordination. To exercise my creativity and imagination. That my ideas have value. Concepts of color, shape size and location. To express myself with both words and pictures.

When I SEE OBJECTS IN NATURE I am learning:

New vocabulary. Concepts of texture, color, weight, size. To group objects into categories, and observe likenesses and differences. To appreciate nature and develop a sense of wonder. To make observations about things in my world.

When I PLAY WITH SAND I am learning:

To exercise my imagination. Concepts of size, shape, volume, empty and full. How to use tools. How to solve problems. Concepts of warm and cool, wet, damp, and dry, heavy and light. How to play with others. How to classify, order and arrange. To create my own patterns and symbols, skills later used in reading and writing. To observe changes.

When I PLAY WITH PLAYDOUGH I am learning:

To see the shape against the background of the table, a reading skill. Concepts of shapes and sizes. That the amount of substance remains the same, even when the shape changes. To control the fine muscles in my fingers and hands. To see negative space when cookie cutter shapes are taken away. Concepts of more and less.

When I SORT THINGS I am learning:

To notice details, likenesses and differences in objects, and to form categories, important concepts for reading and math. Concepts of color and size and shape. Concepts of more and less. Logical reasoning.

