

# playing is learning





## WATCH YOUR CHILD PLAY. She is working hard. And she is learning.

Educators know this. That's why the Ontario early learning full day curriculum is play-based. And that is why the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is encouraging educators in all grades to introduce more play into the school day.



“Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity.”

*Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison, professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and honorary professor of English at the University of St. Andrews.*

The importance of play has been studied for years. This is what research tells us.

- Play builds knowledge and skills, layer by layer, according to where the child is developmentally.
- Play helps children develop strong oral communication skills, make friends, and become more confident.
- Play forms the basis for participation in community and fosters understanding of and respect for diversity.
- Play has a profound positive effect on special needs students.
- Play is the finest method of instruction for students who have English as a second language.
- Play fosters creativity in completing tasks, solving problems, and making decisions.
- Play develops persistence, motivation, and self-esteem, all crucial for children's long-term success.

*(from Primarily Play, ETFO, 2010.)*



“Play is training for the unexpected.”

*Dr. Marc Bekoff, professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder*



**PLAY IS LEARNING.**  
Play is the work of children.



Play can be self-directed or guided. When children are in the playground or at home they engage in self-directed play. When they are in the classroom, they engage in both self-directed and guided play. The educator is organizing the opportunities for play, observing the children’s learning at play, and extending the play without interrupting the learning.

When you walk into a classroom where children are learning through play

exploration, experimentation, and explanation.

In play children are able to project themselves into new situations, to pretend to be someone they aren’t, to empathize, to learn and apply ‘rules’ of engagement, to plan, and to assess.

When you walk into a classroom and see children playing, engage with them. Ask them what they are doing and why they are doing it. Enter into the world they

“Play nourishes every aspect of children’s development – it forms the foundation of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional skills necessary for success in school and in life.” *Canadian Council on Learning*

you will see them talking to one another, writing, reading, acting, building, creating. There will be movement and conversation. And there will be laughter.

In play there aren’t right and wrong answers. There is

have created. And know that they are learning. Through play they will become more creative, more engaged, more questioning, more confident, and more positive about learning. And in the end this is the goal of all education.

*Photography by Anne de Haas*



“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning.”

*Diane Ackerman, poet, essayist, naturalist*



“It is in playing, and only in playing, that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”

*Dr. D.W. Winnicott, British pediatrician 1896–1971*



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