

When I Play I Learn

A child learns through play - in all ways, a truth adults do not always understand.

David Elkind, psychologist and author, says of play:

Young children learn best by playing and following their own curiosities, by solving real problems, such as how to balance a stack of blocks, or how to negotiate a zipper, put together a picture puzzle, and most of all, by making mistakes and trying again.

WHEN I EASEL PAINT I LEARN:

- to develop my imagination and creativity (intelligence)
- to develop eye-hand coordination (writing skill)
- to distinguish and purposely create shapes (math and writing skill)
- to express by feelings and ideas (language)
- that my ideas have value (self esteem)
- relationships of space and size (math and science)
- concepts of symmetry, balance, and design (intelligence)

WHEN I FINGER PAINT I LEARN:

- to exercise my imagination and creativity
- about how colors mix to make new colors (science)
- concepts of shape, size and location (math and writing)
- eye-hand coordination
- an acceptable way to make a mess and have fun sharing ideas with others (self esteem)

WHEN I SCRIBBLE AND DRAW I LEARN:

- to hold a pencil or other drawing implement, and to control the pressure (writing skill)
- eye-hand coordination (writing skill)
- to exercise my creativity and imagination
- that my ideas have value (self esteem)
- concepts of color, shape, size and location (science/math)
- to express myself with words when describing my drawing (language)
- the basic strokes of the printed language (writing)

WHEN I GLUE AND COLLAGE I LEARN:

- to exercise my imagination and creativity
- concepts of shape, size, location and design which is relevant to reading
- about different textures (intelligence)
- how to create patterns and designs (math)
- to distinguish patterns from a background (reading skill)

WHEN I LOOK AT OBJECTS AT A NATURE TABLE I LEARN:

- new vocabulary (language, intelligence)
- concepts of texture, color, weight and size (intelligence)
- to group objects in to categories (math)
- to observe likenesses and differences (math)
- to appreciate nature and develop a sense a wonder (intelligence)

WHEN I PLAY WITH PEGBOARDS I LEARN:

- one to one correspondence (math)
- to make and repeat patterns (math)
- possible left to right progression (reading and writing)
- concepts of addition, as I add one peg at a time
- colors
- symmetry, shapes, order and design (reading, writing, math)
- eye-hand coordination

WHEN I PLAY IN THE FAMILY LIVING AREA AND WITH DRAMATIC PLAY PROPS I LEARN:

- to be flexible in my thinking (intelligence)
- to express myself with my words (language)
- to try on different adult roles (self concept)
- to solve social problems through negotiation with friends (intelligence)
- to sort and organize play things (math)
- to make decisions (intelligence)
- to improvise and use things in a symbolic way (intelligence, math)
- to have an object represent something else (math, intelligence)
- to carry out my ideas, with the cooperation of others (intelligence, self esteem, social skills)
- to exercise my imagination and creativity

WHEN I PLAY WITH BLOCKS, CARS AND TRUCKS I LEARN:

- concepts of shape, size, length, and location (math and reading)
- to create and repeat patterns (math)
- to exercise imagination (intelligence)
- to express ideas (language, intelligence)
- to cooperate with others (social)
- to solve problems (intelligence)
- about the properties of wood (science)
- to see myself from a different perspective (self concept)

WHEN I SORT THINGS I LEARN:

- to notice details, likenesses, differences, and to form categories (reading and math)
- concepts of color, size and shape (math)
- numeral concepts of more and less (math)
- logical reasoning (intelligence)

WHEN I LOOK AT BOOKS AND LISTEN TO STORIES I LEARN:

- that books are important and enjoyable
- that print is written-down words
- to express my own thoughts, feelings and ideas
- to exercise my imagination
- that pictures tell something just like words
- to make up my own stories
- to handle books with care
- 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
- that I like books and someday I would like to be able to read them, too, when I am ready (language, intelligence, love of reading)

WHEN I STRING BEADS I LEARN:

- eye hand coordination
- concepts of color, shape and location
- number concepts like more, less, longer and shorter
- to create and reproduce patterns (math)
- pride in accomplishment (self esteem)

WHEN I PLAY WITH RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS I LEARN:

- to be conscious of rhythms in music (reading skill)
- concepts of fast, slow, loud, soft, high, low (reading and math)
- to express myself in new and different ways
- listening skills
- auditory discrimination (reading)
- awareness and identification with my culture and other cultures (diversity)
- to interpret and understand signals and cues

WHEN I SING SONGS I LEARN:

- principles of music and rhythm
- vocabulary
- memory skills and sequencing (reading, math)
- to be conscious of others
- various concepts emphasized in songs
- phonics or auditory discrimination (reading)
- awareness and identification with my culture and other cultures

WHEN I CUT WITH SCISSORS I LEARN:

- to control the small muscles in my hand (writing)
- concepts of shape, size, color and location (math)
- to exercise my imagination and creativity

WHEN I PARTICIPATE IN GROUP TIME I LEARN:

- to listen, sit still, and understand spoken words
- that my ideas have value to the other children and the teacher (self concept)
- to wait my turn when others are talking
- new vocabulary words
- to remember the words of songs and poems I have learned and to put things in proper order
- the names of others in the group
- to cooperate and be considerate of the needs of others
- to help plan what we will do and when we will need to do it

WHEN I DO COOKING PROJECTS I LEARN:

- about nutrition, tastes and food groups (intelligence)
- how heat and cold change things (science)
- whole-part relationships and concepts of volume and measures (math) vocabulary
- awareness of my own and other cultures (intelligence, diversity)

WHEN I PLAY WITH RIDING TOYS I LEARN:

- strength, balance and large muscle coordination
- to use my energy in a constructive way
- concepts of speed, direction and location (math)
- to use my imagination
- to negotiate and take turns (social skills)
- to solve problems (intelligence)
- self confidence as I master new skills

WHEN I DANCE I LEARN:

- balance and coordination
- to be conscious of moods and rhythms of music
- to express myself physically in an appropriate way
- about the space around me and the space of others

WHEN I PLAY ON CLIMBING EQUIPMENT I LEARN:

- physical strength, coordination and balance
- to use my imagination
- to cooperate with others when involved in group play
- to solve problems
- self confidence as I develop new skills

WHEN I PLAY WITH SAND I LEARN:

- to exercise my imagination
- concepts of size, shape and volume (math)
- how to use tools (writing)
- to solve problems (intelligence)
- concepts of warm and cool, wet, damp, dry, heavy, light (intelligence)
- how to play socially with others
- to create systems for classifying, ordering and arranging (math)
- to observe changes (science)

WHEN I PLAY I LEARN:

- that I am ME -- a small child who is valued, cherished, and loved
- I count in the world!