

Learning Through Play in Kindergarten

- Teachers and Early Childhood Educators plan, facilitate, and engage children in learning through play experiences
- This is a change from children learning exclusively through specific teaching instruction, followed by demonstrating their understanding of the content through “paper and pencil” tasks.
- Ontario’s play based kindergarten program reflects current research on child brain development
- In the early childhood year, children learn through hands on exploration.
- Play is the natural work of children
- This approach to learning is coupled with what is referred to as “inquiry based” or “emergent” learning.
- When educators engage children in play, methodical forms of observation are used to create learning experiences that build upon children’s natural curiosity about the world around them.

Dispelling the Myth of PLAY

- It is often believed by some, that “learning through play” lacks structure, and that children are simply “playing” and are not being taught or learning important math and language skills.
- And that an “inquiry” or “emergent” based approach means that children will not be taught or learn anything unless they display an interest in a particular object.
- As a society, we often look for traditional visuals of school and what learning looks like, (a teacher at the front of a classroom, students sitting at desks with pencils and paper).
- However, a play and inquiry based approach considers children on an individual basis, supporting each child within their own area of development.
- Teachers and educators build deeper, more meaningful relationships with children, and teach according to where children are at and where they need to go.

How Will My Child Be Evaluated in a PLAY Based Program

- You can still expect your child to be evaluated in learning areas of math, language, literacy, and science.
- However, the kindergarten report card is not categorized by these subject areas, and you won’t find your child evaluated using any kind of rating scale.
- Rather, the kindergarten report card focuses on children’s achievements, describes their learning experiences, and identifies next steps for growth.
- The evaluation and reporting process does not evaluate children using standardized benchmarks
- Learning areas that are included in the kindergarten report card are:
 - Belonging and contributing
 - Self-regulation and well being
 - Demonstrating literacy and math behaviours
 - Problem solving and innovating

The Classroom

- Kindergarten classrooms are designed with different play centres for children to explore. When your child tells you that they “played today”, they are actually developing many different skills as they play and learn

Block Centre:

- Problem solving
- Spatial awareness
- Social skills
- Creativity and innovation

Dramatic Play Centre

- Social and emotional development
- Building language and vocabulary
- Creative expression
- Problem solving

Sensory: (sand, water play, playdough)

- Engagement of the senses, body, and mind
- Testing theories
- Analytical thinking

The Writing Centre:

- Fine motor development
- Exploring written language and its different forms
- Developing and understanding that print can convey a message and is a form of communication

The Art Centre:

- Experiment with different materials, techniques, and processes
- Develop creative and innovative thinking, as well as problem solving skills
- Express ideas, thoughts, and feeling through different art forms

Even though our children may be not able to interact with peers right now, play is still important!

They can learn all these skills through interactions with you as their role model!

This document, from the Ministry of Education, is used in Early On Child and Family Centres, Licensed Child Care Centres and the full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program. It is full information that is relevant to our philosophy in the early years.