

# Reclaiming Playful Learning in Kindergarten

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## I believe ...

“What makes early childhood education unique is it starts with the child and **NOT** the subject matter.”

“**Young children learn best in rich setting with warm human relationships in choosing their activities and teachers help them build on their experiences.**”

“Child-initiated play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills.”

Playful Learning embraces all that is right about the BEST early childhood classrooms!!

Hey there neighbor; What do you say? It's gonna be a beautiful day.  
Clap your hands and boogie right down. Give me a bump and sit right down.



### What do you believe about Playful Learning in Kindergarten?

“Shoulder share” your impressions and knowledge of Playful Learning in Kindergarten ...  
Be prepared to share your thoughts with the group.

***You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation. -- Plato***



**Playful Memories ... THINK about a time when you were actively playing at the age of 5 or 6 ... WHO were you with? ... WHERE were you playing? ... WHAT sounds did you hear?**

### Making Room for All Types of Play -- from *Crisis in Kindergarten, Alliance for Childhood* (2009)

Play has many faces. Climbing a tree is different from building a house with sticks and stones or dressing up for make-believe play. Yet when the child is up in the tree she may well become a pirate surveying the sea around her. There are different types of play, but they often overlap in rich play scenarios. The well-developed player has a repertoire with many forms of play; the playful pre- kindergarten supports them all. Play does not stay neatly in categories, but knowing and watching for the broad types helps sensitize teachers and parents to the shifting landscapes children create. It also provides a tool for assessing whether a playful kindergarten is providing adequate opportunity and materials for all types of play. Twelve key types of play are:

- **Large-motor play:** Children love to climb, run, slide, swing, jump, and engage in every type of movement possible. Such play develops coordination, balance, and a sense of one's body in the space around it.
- **Small-motor play:** Play with small toys and activities like stringing beads, playing with puzzles, and sorting objects into types develops dexterity.
- **Mastery play:** Children often repeat an action in play and persevere until they master it, such as making dozens of “birthday packages” to learn to tie bows, or playing on a balance beam to become a “circus performer.”
- **Rules-based play:** Kindergartners and grade-school children enjoy the challenge of making up their own rules and the social negotiation involved in adapting the rules for each play situation.
- **Construction play:** Building houses, ships, forts, and other structures is a basic form of play that requires skill and imagination.
- **Make-believe play:** This broad category incorporates many other play types and is rich with language, problem-solving, and imagination. It frequently begins with “Let's pretend” and goes on to include anything children might have experienced or imagined.

- **Symbolic play:** Children take an object at hand and convert it into the toy or prop they need through a fluid process of fantasy or imagination.
- **Language play:** Children develop mastery by playing with words, rhymes, verses, and songs they make up or change. They tell stories and dramatize them. They are fascinated by foreign languages, especially when they are presented playfully in story, verse, or song.
- **Playing with the arts:** Children integrate all forms of art into their play, using whatever materials are at hand to draw, model, create music, perform puppet shows, and so on. They explore the arts and use them to express their feelings and ideas.
- **Sensory play:** Most children enjoy playing with dirt, sand, mud, water, and other materials with different textures, sounds, and smells. Such play develops the senses.
- **Rough-and-tumble play:** This fundamental form of play is found in animals as well as human children. Animals know how to play roughly without injury by rounding their body gestures and not aiming for dominance. Children can be helped to do the same if their play becomes too aggressive.
- **Risk-taking play:** Children extend their abilities through risky play and learn to master challenging environments. They generally know how far they can go without actually hurting themselves. Regrettably, most current play spaces are designed to be as risk-free as possible, giving children little chance to assess risks and set their own boundaries.

### The Importance of PLAY -- Play boosts strong growth in many areas, including ...

- **Mental:** There is a close link between play and strong brain growth. It lays the groundwork for later school success in reading and writing. It provides experiences that help children develop.
- **Social:** Play is important for the imagination. It also helps to develop creative problem-solving skills.
- **Emotional:** Make-believe play improves teamwork and compassion. It also helps children learn to control their behaviors.
- **Physical:** The rough and tumble of active play helps children's muscles develop, and brain growth.

### Play has other benefits for learning:

- Most kindergartners are not ready to sit and listen for long periods of time.
- Research shows play works better when the teacher uses the child's strengths and interests. The teacher can then provide chances to learn through meaningful and rich active-learning experiences.

A young child's play is his/her work. A kindergarten classroom should be filled with chances to learn through play.

- Children love school when the teacher supports their learning both in and out of class and when their parents are interested in their school day.

From Michigan Department of Education's website - Retrieved on May 22, 2010 from <http://www.greatstartjackson.org/files/pg/PG7.pdf>

### Play is viewed as something that ... (Elena Bodrova)

- Comes out of children's own interests;
- **Is focused on process and not product;**
- Involves interaction with others (adults and peers); and
- **Does not depend on extrinsic rewards.**

**From a Crisis in Kindergarten ... Child-initiated play when combined with playful, focused learning leads to lifelong benefits in ways that didactic drills, standardized tests, and scripted teachings do not.**



### **Why Play Has Changed??**

Here are some other top-sellers in our kindergarten age group. What do you notice about these toys?  
“Shoulder share” your thoughts and/or ideas...

- ✓ Can be used by one child
- ✓ Limited function
- ✓ Function is defined by the toy



### **How do we advocate for change??**

Discuss your thoughts, ideas, and strategies...

***“If there is anything we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.”***

***-- Carl Jung***

### **Resources:**

- Alliance for Childhood [www.allianceforchildhood.org](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)
- ***Play in the Early Years: Key to School Success*** (policy brief), May 2007  
<http://earlychildhoodfunders.org/pdf/play07.pdf>
- ***Speaking out for play-based learning: Becoming an effective advocate for play in the early childhood classrooms***: [http://leadershiplinc.illinoisstate.edu/play-based-learning/documents/speaking\\_out\\_for\\_playbase.pdf](http://leadershiplinc.illinoisstate.edu/play-based-learning/documents/speaking_out_for_playbase.pdf)

### **Upcoming Events**

- TASP (The Association for the Study of Play) and IPA/USA (The American Association for the Child’s Right to Play) will hold a joint conference at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, March 6-9, 2013.
- The US Play Coalition will hold its 2013 Conference on the Value of Play at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, Feb. 17-20. Submissions for presentation proposals are being accepted now, with a deadline of Oct. 4, 2012.
- The annual conference of NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) will be in Atlanta, GA, Nov. 7-10, 2012. The Alliance will be at Booth #1356 in the exhibition area. Please stop by – we’d love to see you!
- The sixth annual one-day Wonderplay Conference will take place on Nov. 16, 2012, at the 92nd St. Y in New York City.