



# The Value of Play in Kindergarten

"Play" centers are widely used in Kindergarten. These centers provide a variety of free choice activities that the children may do according to their interest. One of the most important goals in early childhood is to help children become enthusiastic learners. To a teacher, this means encouraging children to be active, creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas. We want children to become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners, teaching them how to learn! So, where does play come in? EVERYWHERE! Often times, we will have a parent share that when their child comes home from school and is asked what he/she did that day, and the answer is, "Nothing. We just played."

So, let's begin by explaining what is happening during all this playtime. Play for kindergartners is their work. Much of the centers is incorporated into the classroom for a specific reason. In kindergarten, you must keep in mind that we are looking at the WHOLE child from a developmental perspective. We want the child to develop socially - develop friendships, trust their environment, feel comfortable as part of the group; emotionally - to experience pride, self-confidence, independence, self-control; cognitively to become confident learners, acquire learning skills, become problem-solvers; and physically - to increase large and small motor skills. Interest centers do just that. An example is playing with blocks. By doing so, the children are learning the value of size, weight, number concepts, control, coordination, and recreating the world around them. In actuality, they are experiencing math, science, physical coordination, geography, and social skills. So when your child tells you the he/she "played" at school, you will know what his/her play is all about.

# HOW DOES A KINDERGARTNER GROW?

With loving care, room to spare,  
and the classroom described below!

The centers in  
our classroom  
provide  
opportunities  
for children to:

- develop social skills
- set goals
- make decisions
- use individual learning styles
- work at their own pace
- develop creativity and expression
- communicate ideas

Look for these  
centers and the  
learning  
opportunities  
they provide in  
our classroom:

## DRAMATIC-PLAY CENTER

- communication skills
- life skills
- conflict resolution
- vocabulary development
- problem solving
- human equity and diversity
- understand experiences through role-playing
- classification

## READING AREA

- vocabulary
- communicating
- remembering details
- reading readiness

## WRITING CENTER

- sequencing
- letter recognition
- vocabulary
- fine-motor skills
- creativity
- recording ideas

## BLOCKS AREA

- shape and size discrimination
- spatial relationships
- number skills
- balance
- cause and effect
- classification
- creativity
- cooperation
- measurement
- physical coordination

## SAND/WATER TABLES

- exploration and discovery
- cause and effect
- measurement
- problem solving
- properties of matter

## LISTENING CENTER

- following directions
- comprehension
- vocabulary

## SCIENCE AREA

- observation
- exploration
- investigation
- predicting
- experimenting

## ART CENTER

- fine-motor skills
- creative expression
- colors, shapes, and size relationships
- self-esteem
- exploring materials
- visual perception

## GAMES/ MANIPULATIVES CENTER

- hand-eye coordination
- classification
- visual perception
- problem solving
- social skills
- counting
- patterning

## MUSIC CENTER

- rhythm
- coordination
- listening skills

