

Facilitating Children's Play

Young children need opportunities for different kinds of indoor and outdoor play. They need the support of knowledgeable adults and parents who do the following:

- Provide long, uninterrupted periods (45-60 minutes minimum) for spontaneous free play.
- Provide a sufficient variety of materials to stimulate different kinds of play – blocks and construction toys for cognitive development; sand, mud, water, clay, paint, and other open-ended materials for sensory play, dress-up clothes and props for pretend play; balls, hoops, climbing places, and open space for gross motor play.
- Provide loose parts for play, both indoors and out, and encourage children to manipulate the environment to support their play.
- Go outside! Parks and forests provide ample opportunities for creative play.
- Consider the opportunities for challenge and age appropriate risk-taking in play.
- Ensure that all children have access to play opportunities and are included in play.
- Let children play for their own purposes.
- Play with children on their terms, taking the occasional ride down the slide, or putting on a hat and assuming a role in pretend play.
- Recognize the value of messy play, rough-and-tumble play, and nonsense play.
- Understand that children need to feel a sense of belonging to the play culture of childhood.
- Take an interest in their play, asking questions, offering suggestions, and engaging eagerly as co-players when invited.



References

From Dr. Jane Hewes' Let the Children Play: Nature's Answer to Learning.
<http://galileo.org/earlylearning/downloads/facilitating-childrens-play.pdf>



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