

# The Importance of Play!

In early childhood it is generally agreed upon that play is of key importance to the child's development. Play and exploration is the way in which children learn about their world, gaining the pre-academic skills that they will need later in life.

Think about the courses (the academics) that you were exposed to in middle school and high school ~ Algebra, Geometry, Computers, Civics, Biology, Chemistry, Literature, "Arts", etc. We can refer to these as the **House of Higher Learning**. As with any house, the strength of the house is only as good as the foundation on which it was built.

**As early educators it is our job to help build this foundation.**

## HOW?

Each day children need opportunities to **CREATE**, not just with crayons and markers, but with blocks and words too. Is the final product the important part? No! The process is what we are encouraging.

Children must **MOVE**. Children are active people. They take in information through movement, give them the time to do so.

Understand the importance of songs to a child. **SING** to the children or just sing! Exposure to music is essential.

**DISCUSS**: let the children listen as you talk through problems and discover solutions. Encourage even the youngest kids to problem solve and work through tasks.

As with discussing, you need to encourage children to **OBSERVE**. Talk about what they see, provide opportunities to see exciting things happen. Have you ever seen a caterpillar transform into a butterfly? Or tadpoles into frogs?

**READ READ READ**. Every day!

Now where does the PLAY fit in? Well this is the structure of the foundation, Play is the cement that holds it all together. So what happens if there is no room for play in our programs? Or what happens structurally if one or more of the areas is missing? As with a house, it will be structurally unsound, and eventually cause problems.

*We need to create the environments to encourage play and prepare children for the future in Kindergarten and later academics, as well as creating a love of life long learning.*

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