

A Child's Play is a Child's Work

*"But all these children are doing is playing! I want my child to **learn** something!"*

Many an early childhood teacher has cringed while hearing a parent express that thought. Through training and experience, effective teachers learn to value organized playtime as an avenue to learning. Just as an infant doesn't learn to crawl or talk during a structured class, but through encouragement from a loving caregiver and sheer determination, he or she will typically advance through the skills of toddlerhood and his preschool years in much the same manner.

For instance,

~While building a block structure, your child learns about size relationships, gravity, and one-to-one correspondence among other things.

~Coloring and play dough develop the fine-motor muscles of the hand and fingers, hand-eye coordination and introduces colors, textures, etc.

~Role playing in the dress up or home center helps a child understand others' roles and relationships in their world and builds social skills.

Our society has gotten so used to the teacher's convenient use of worksheets, we have forgotten that most of a child's learning should come from real-world experiences. A worksheet is too abstract for the *young* child to gain true knowledge, other than practice at fine-motor skills and writing.

Consider how **you'd** rather learn about your world, by reading a sentence and writing the answer to a question, or exploring it through hands-on activities and interactive experiments while keeping records in a journal, if needed. While there is a place for worksheets, it should not be the main way in which young children are taught and I strive to help parents learn more exciting methods for the majority of their children's learning. So, if there is an effective and more exciting method (for child **and** parent) to learn a skill, give it a try and keep the fun in learning.

~by Gina Moore, Early Childhood Teacher ~ Courtesy of MommyNature.com~

