

Learning Through Play

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EC students.

We have all seen them.

And, we have all, at some point, wished we were them, transported back to a time when the world was much smaller and every new experience inspired us to ask, “Why?” A time when we voluntarily took risks and challenged ourselves to overcome obstacles that, in our eyes, had never been by anyone else. We knew there was knowledge out there, and we were determined to find it. All that mattered in our worlds were these moments of intrigue and wonder. Through it all, we learned to communicate, inquire, take risks, and much more. Looking back now, we learned because we had the freedom to play.

Over the past several years, the Early Childhood classes have been fostering this natural desire to inquire and explore in their classrooms through a pedagogical approach entitled, *Learning Through Play*. Rooted in Jean Piaget’s belief that children construct meaning by interacting with their surroundings, Learning Through Play provides children with authentic and engaging learning experiences that enhance their emotional, cognitive, physical and social development. This approach not only challenges students academically, but also helps ease the transition for them to take on a full-day of school.

When you walk into an Early Childhood classroom where students are learning through play, you will see them independently engaged in a wide-variety of activities. To the untrained eye, one might question how students can have so much fun while learning. However, our teachers purposefully plan all activities, so the children have developmentally appropriate choices. Teachers constantly observe what students are doing in order to inform their teaching and future planning.

Painting, drawing, acting, constructing, writing, reading, and speaking are all embedded in our play-based programme. You might see one group of students manipulating play-dough while another is mashing fresh herbs with a mortar and pestle to improve their fine-motor skills, which are essential for writing. During the same lesson, some students might be rereading familiar poems from previous literacy lessons and some are creating a dramatic reenactment of a favorite book.

What you will never hear is silence. They are making sense of the world around them and constantly communicating about it. From comparing play-dough snakes to articulating the construction of a symmetrical building made of blocks, language permeates through these classrooms. James Britton stated, “Reading and writing float on a sea of talk”. Talk is the foundation of literacy, and fostering discussions in Early Childhood classrooms sets students up for greater success in the future.

Next time you are walking past the new EC play structure, stop and think how these children are setting the example for how we should interact with the world.