

Play School: Open Wide, Learn Inside (and Out) – Part Two (with apologies to the ABC)

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“Play is an integral part of a child’s being. It is the business of childhood and it has a unique and vital role in the whole education process.” (Weininger, 1994)

The benefits of play reach far beyond ensuring your child is enjoying her or himself in that moment. Play is crucial for building social skills, such as strengthening relationships within the family and developing friendships with peers. Through making choices about who gets to ride the kindergarten bike and developing and following rules in a new playground game at recess, children learn to share, cooperate and negotiate with others. Pretending to be someone else allows a child to develop empathy; games that require turn-taking build an essential skill for conversation and promote impulse control.

Play prepares children not only for school, but builds skills needed through to adulthood. Children develop the ability to concentrate on an activity, crucial for success in the classroom and workplace. Through play, children build their capacity for abstract thinking. Discovering that one thing can be represented by another physical item, gesture or words prepares children to understand that in English class, those three lines make a ‘k’ sound, and that in Maths, that squiggle means ‘5’.

In play, children develop important life skills. They are empowered to make their own choices and have the chance to take risks in a supported environment. Through trial and error, children make judgements and learn from ‘mistakes’, using feedback to guide future actions and decision-making. Children who are given materials that can be used to create or represent many items, eg. blocks as well as puzzles, develop stronger problem-solving skills.

Emotional wellbeing is another area supported by play. Children build self-esteem, confidence and resilience through winning, losing and achieving goals as a team or individual. Outdoor play in particular fosters a sense of independence and helps children to manage stress. Play with animals assists children to develop responsibility and empathy for others. Creating special places at the playground, park or beach is likely to result in happy memories for children as they grow older.

Clearly, your child’s physical health and development is also positively influenced by play. Through running, jumping, skipping and hopping, to crawling and rolling on the ground, children build strong muscles and bones. They also improve their motor skills, including balance and agility, especially through outdoor play.

The need to play just cannot be ignored – why not go out and play today?

“Free, imaginative play is crucial for normal social, emotional and cognitive development. It makes us better adjusted, smarter and less stressed.” (Melinda Wenner, Scientific American, Jan 28, 2009)

by Nicola Anglin (Speech Pathologist)



<http://coffsforkids.com/playschool-is-coming-to-town/>

Resources:

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-publth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines>

Move and Play Every Day

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines/\\$File/Tips&Ideas-Children-0-5years.PDF](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines/$File/Tips&Ideas-Children-0-5years.PDF)

Make your move – Sit less – Be active for life!

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/\\$File/brochure%20PA%20Guidelines_A5_5-12yrs.PDF](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/$File/brochure%20PA%20Guidelines_A5_5-12yrs.PDF)

Vince Borg, Sarah Young, Vicky Andrews and Emma Lorenzin all have a special interest in speech development and language difficulty. Book your child an appointment with a speech therapist at Box Hill Speech Pathology Clinic on (03) 9899 5494 or direct your child speech therapy questions to enquiries@speech-therapy.com.au.

References:

http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ncd/forum2012_letthechildrenplay1.pdf

http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ncd/forum2012_letthechildrenplay2.pdf

http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ncd/forum2012_letthechildrenplay3.pdf

http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ncd/forum2012_letthechildrenplay4.pdf