



## How your Child Learns and Develops

Good quality early childhood programs provide babies, toddlers and children with many opportunities to:

- play – on their own, with friends, or with an educator
- have fun, be cuddled by a special educator, and laugh
- participate in activities similar to those at home, such as playing, cooking, etc.
- become independent and develop a sense of self within a 'community' of friends
- begin to take responsibility for themselves and their belongings
- take part in the daily life of the program so that they feel like they belong – deciding who and what to play with, making group rules, setting tables and cleaning up.

These programs build on the learning that occurs at home and in the community.

### The importance of play

'Children learn through play' is a commonly heard phrase that is not well understood. The educator's role is to share your child's learning journey with you and add to your understanding of how these foundational skills, or life skills, will contribute to your child's future learning experiences.

Children learn with their whole selves when they play – their senses, their imagination, their mind, their heart, and their view of themselves and people in their immediate world. To adults, children's play can look like the fun it usually is, but play is also serious work for children. The presence of a familiar supportive adult provides children with the important feeling of safety, security and warmth.

### How does this happen?

Talking (and in later childhood, reading and writing) are important skills, but there is much vital learning that must occur before children reach these milestones. For example:

- Active floor play for babies involving age-appropriate toys and adult/child interaction supports their physical development and encourages exploration.
- Playing with sand, play-dough, water, or mud, helps babies, toddlers and children learn about textures and what happens when a liquid is mixed with a solid.
- Basic science and maths concepts such as '1 cup' and '100 ml' are learnt through cooking and measuring.
- Encouraging toddlers and children to persist and showing them that it is okay to make mistakes and how to learn from mistakes. It is important that both educators and families help children succeed so they see themselves as capable learners.

You, as a parent, are your child's first and most influential teacher. High quality early childhood programs will support you and your child throughout this journey of discovering the world, and help your child learn important life skills and skills for further schooling.

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