

Play at Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre (MPC)

Play means different things to different people. Some play can be aimless, fun and amusing. It can also be a focussed, highly engaging learning process.

At MPC, play is valued as a significant means for learning and allows opportunities for children and teachers together, to plan the curriculum (what happens in the day). Play can provide insights into children's interests, skills, beliefs, joys, what makes them laugh, anxieties and frustrations, how they learn, their intentions, how they represent their ideas, what they think, their skills, knowledge and dispositions. Allowing time for play enables children to develop their ideas, understandings and relationships, to persist, to take a risk, to make mistakes and try again.

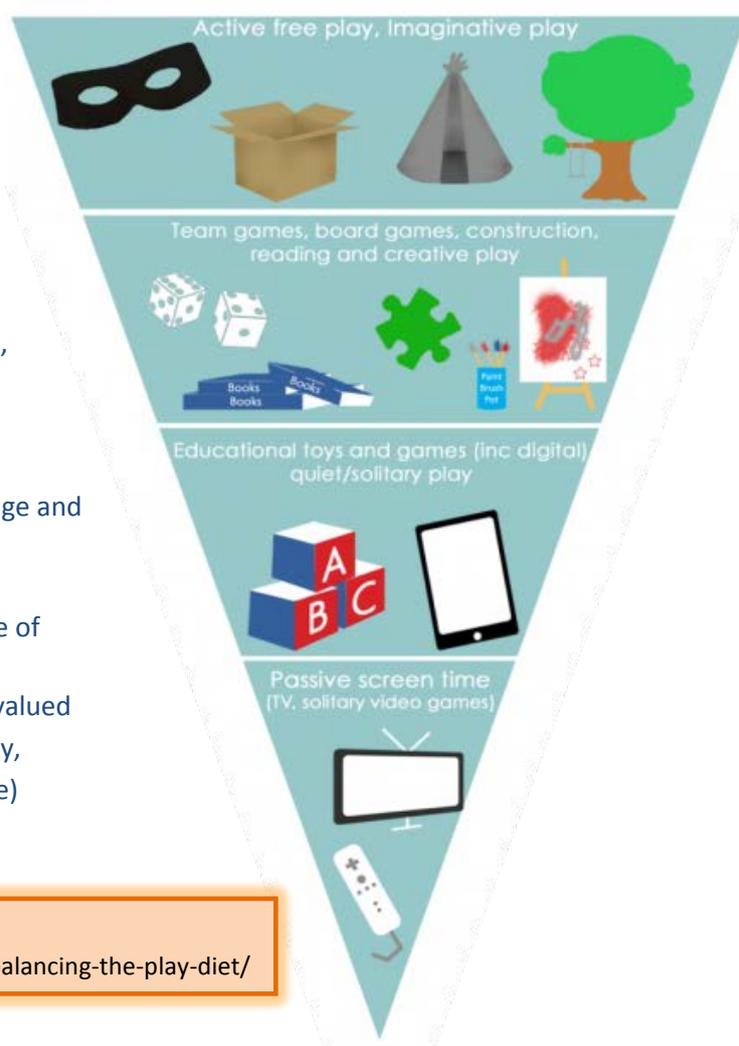
Teachers and educators use their knowledge and understandings about early childhood frameworks, current research, theories of learning as well as their observations and interactions with children to support each child's growth, learning and development. We advocate for and promote the importance of allowing time and opportunity for children to be, play and feel a rich sense of belonging to their world. Play enables children a myriad of opportunities to learn, grow and become avid, ambitious and resilient learners.

Play creates a brain that has increased 'flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life. (Lester & Russell, 2008).
<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/every-child-magazine/every-child-index/every-child-vol-16-3-2010/play-based-learning>

Why do we play at kindy?

In play children are:

- Making connections and building relationships
- Experiencing real life with all its ups and downs; building resilience and self-regulation
- Able to control what they are doing and make decisions about their actions (have agency)
- Intrinsically motivated: testing and exploring their own capabilities
- Learning to be risk takers
- Investigating, discovering, wondering
- Engaging in pretend or 'as if'
- Thinking creatively and flexibly, adjusting to change and solving problems
- Learning social skills, making choices, learning to negotiate and work collaboratively
- Refining fine motor skills whilst making their designs, props and contraptions
- Developing language skills (oral, literacy)
- Representing their ideas in a variety of ways
- Extending their scientific and mathematical knowledge and understandings about the world around them
- Learning to question, request and share information
- Understanding fairness, a caring attitude and a sense of empathy (thinking of self and others)
- Gaining self-confidence: feeling that their ideas are valued
- Build Executive Function skills (memory, think flexibly, make plans, focus, control impulses and self-regulate)
- Learning about trust and respect.



Our play diet at Kindy is well balanced!

<http://www.fundamentallychildren.com/parenting-tools-advice/balancing-the-play-diet/>

As teachers and educators the focus at any point in time may be as a listener, co-player, observer, analyser, facilitator, collaborator, inquirer, resource person, mediator, supporter and overseer.



The builders designed their construction, talking and working together to make the site safe before building higher.



Some children wanted to be police officers. They worked out where to build the police station, investigated what jobs police do, collected and made props, shared the police uniforms and continued playing over many days.

These are some of the ways that teachers and educators foster learning?

- Listening to and playing alongside children
- Looking closely and interacting over time to learn what children's play, conversations and behaviours are telling us about them
- Allowing space and blocks of time for children to think about and play out their own ideas building their confidence.
- Using questions, sharing observations and acknowledging attempts to help children to see themselves as problem solvers, able to cope with disappointments and building resilience (e.g. "There are only two police shirts, could one person be a plain clothes officer?")
- Using opportunities as they arise to promote fair, safe and kind play. (e.g. "I've noticed you've made the building site safe for others. What a good idea to put the cones around.")
- Building on their strengths and interests
- Supporting play entry (e.g. "Could 'L' help to deliver some tools to the job site?")
- Encouraging children to listen to each other
- Valuing children's ideas giving them time to make their play happen, and helping their ideas come to life
- Encouraging children to think creatively, solve problems and view themselves as capable and competent (e.g. "All the screen walls have been used, what else could you use to build the walls of the police station?")
- Increasing literacy and numeracy understandings (e.g. "How are you going to make the building secure? I see, you're adding the same number of blocks on either." "That police book is a good idea for writing down phone messages.")
- Building connections with each other, practising negotiating, learning to compromise. (e.g. You could ask 'T' for a turn of the hard hat after she's finished delivering that load.")
- Acknowledging and helping children take a risk (try something they're unsure about) and be brave. (e.g. Can I play in the police game?). Persevering if rejected. (e.g. "I'm a police officer, look at my shirt.")
- Incorporating fine motor skills to continue the play scenario (e.g. Pushing phone numbers or adding pretend writing in the police book is more motivating than being asked to write something that is not in their interest area)
- Prompting questions for accessing and making props. (What do the police need to write their reports?)
- Extending their ideas and knowledge with open ended questions (e.g. I wonder what police officers do?)

From Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (State of Queensland 2010: 32-33)

