

The Power of Play



Session 4: June 11, 2025





Together Growing Strong is a community partnership
dedicated to supporting Sunset Park families,
from pregnancy through the age of seven.

TOGETHER GROWING STRONG CARE PROGRAMMING

COMMUNITY-BASED
ACTIVITIES
RESOURCES
EDUCTION

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Session 1: Strengthening Your Child's Independence

June 2 @ 6pm

- How can I prepare my child for the school setting and school routines?
- How can I help my child become more independent?

Session 3: Supporting Your Child's Social and Emotional Skills

June 9 @ 6pm

- How do I prepare my child for school separation anxiety and feelings about a new school?
- You will receive a book to help your child learn about school.

Session 2: What to Expect in Kindergarten

June 4 @ 6pm

- What will my child learn in Kindergarten?
- How is Kindergarten different from Pre-K?
- Workshop presented by K teachers!

Session 4: The Power of Play

June 11 @ 6pm

- Why is play important?
- How do I support my child's learning during play and everyday routines?

Workshop goals

1. What is play?
2. Why is play important for learning?
3. How can parents support play?

What is play?

What is play?



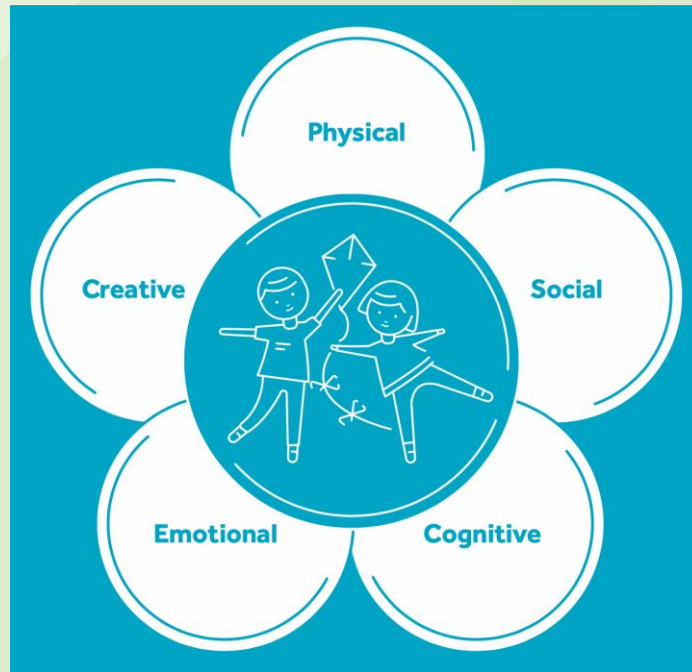
Children love to play!

- Children spend a lot of time interacting with their environments
- “*Play is the work of children*” – Maria Montessori



Why is play important for learning?

Play is learning!



Play helps children acquire skills for school success

- When children play, they gain academic skills, emotional skills, social skills, and physical skills that will help them succeed in school and life
- Play and learning are one and the same

Language & Communication Skills

- Play allows children to learn new words by talking to others
 - Taking turns
 - Back-and-forth
 - Using words



Play helps children develop academic skills



Academic Skills

- Academic skills are central to:



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Problem Solving

- Play exposes children to cause and effect
 - Shaking a toy and hearing the sound
 - Building a block tower and pushing it down



Emotional Skills

- Understanding emotions in self and others
- Controlling emotions and behaviors
- Strategies for coping with stress



Social Skills

- Interacting, listening and communicating
- Sharing, taking turns, and cooperation
- Even conflicts offer opportunities to learn:
 - Others have views different than their own
 - How to get along



Physical Skills

- Gross motor skills: walking, running, balancing
- Fine motor skills: writing, drawing, block-building, puzzle play



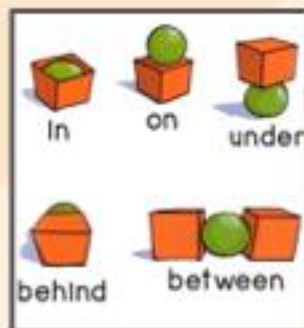
Physical and mental wellbeing

- Develop and build strong friendship
- Encourage sharing and collaboration
- Build confidence



Math Skills

- Play supports children to develop math skills:
 - Sorting shapes and sizes
 - Counting out blocks or art materials
 - Recognizing patterns/shapes



Math Skills

Number 'Three'



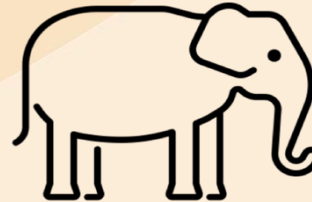
Shapes 'Circle'



Spatial Relations 'Above'



Magnitude 'Big'



How does play develop over time?



0-3 Months: beginning to interact with surroundings



Baby reflexes –
grasping hands,
fingers, rattles



...to body movements –
reaching for objects & people

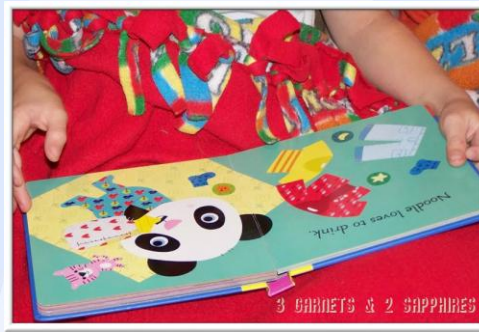
3-6 Months: beginning to interact with people

- Eye contact and reacting to faces
- Making connections (for example: peekaboo)
- Social play and bonding with others



6-12 months: exploration play

- Infants begin to focus behaviors on specific objects
 - For example: pressing buttons, squishing pillows, turning pages



12-24 months: Pretend play & purposeful play

- Playing with a goal in mind:
 - Building towers, throwing balls, simple puzzles, shape sorters, pushing strollers
- Beginnings of pretend play
 - play feeding stuffed animals, pretending to be mommy



12-24 months: Pretend play & purposeful play

- As children learn to walk: They carry things over to people to share
- They "INITIATE" play interactions with others.



24-36 months: Imagination and elaborated play

- Longer and more complicated imaginative play
- Beginnings of role play
- Peer play starts as parallel play
- Major language development



3-5 years: Role play & rule based play

- Role play becomes more detailed (for example, playing house, adventuring)
- Games with rules (Simon Says)
- Peer play becomes cooperative
- Longer periods of play
- Growth in fine motor play: drawing, arts & crafts



**What are you child's
favorite ways to play?**

**How do you think that
supports your child's
learning?**

Play is lifelong!

- Play sets your child up for lifelong well-being
- Including play breaks during work (e.g., homework) improves a child's focus & learning
- Physical activity helps support healthy growth



Ways to support children's play



Children love to explore!



Supporting Play

- Let children explore safely: they will get into everything – that's OK!
- Allow children to play with “non-toys”: for example, boxes and pots
- Avoid scolding children for getting into your things; remove objects you don't want them to play with and give them something else

Finding a balance

- Balancing children's need to play with adults' desire for order
- Let children play outside; set up places where they can get messy that will be easy to clean up (for example: painting corner, bathtub)



Get involved to support learning !

- Name and respond
- Give suggestions, but follow your child's lead
- Point out colors, shapes, numbers, letters
- Demonstrate more complex forms of play (how to fit Legos together, playing house with stuffed animals)
- Ask questions & role play with your child
 - Is Teddy hungry?
 - How is your unicorn feeling?

Follow

Young children learn best when you follow their lead. Tune into your child's words, sounds, movements, and ideas! Then respond with your own words and actions.



Take Turns

Children learn from taking turns when you play, talk, or explore. After they go, take your turn. Then repeat: they go, you go, they go, you go!



Encourage your child to play in different ways with different things

- **Math learning:**
 - puzzles, blocks, cups
- **Emotions, empathy, language**
 - dolls, animals, tea sets, etc.
- **Fine motor skills:**
 - crayons, markers, paint, puzzles
- **Gross motor skills:**
 - playground, balls



Play & daily routines

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19m3acCivJdGV0gRqZEadtKTRVfbCx5rkotWrlywVNI4/edit?tab=t.0>

Play & daily routines

When you and your child are:

Walking to School

- Play I-Spy, or other games

Grocery Shopping

- Pretend you are at a farm picking food

Cooking

- Let your child stir the soup, hand you items, or pretend to “cook” something next to you

Cleaning:

- Let your child help you with swiping and mopping the floor



What are some ways you support your child's play?



Questions?



Feedback Survey

<https://forms.gle/RitSEC11xkDB53jD9>





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