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Learning to Write and Loving It!.

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Check It Out!

“Chopsticks and Counting Chips: Do Play and Foundational Skills Need to Compete for the Teacher’s Attention in an Early Childhood Classroom?” by Elena Bodrova and Deborah J. Leong in *Beyond the Journal: Young Children on the Web* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004), 1–7. Also see *Spotlight on Young Children and Play*, edited by Derry Koralek (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004). “The Importance of Being Playful,” by Elena Bodrova and Deborah J. Leong in *Educational Leadership* 60, no. 7 (2003): 50–53.

Play-based learning and focused teaching are NOT mutually exclusive. Young children need both!



Check It Out!

Playing is Learning is a great pamphlet for parents of preschool and kindergarten children (<http://www.efo.ca/ELKP/PlayingisLearning/Documents/PlayingisLearning.pdf>).

Literacy Learning and Play

Young children are meant to play and literacy learning naturally supports play. “Children benefit both from engaging in self-initiated spontaneous play and from teacher-planned and structured activities, projects and experiences” (Copple and Bredekamp 2009b, 49). “Rather than detracting from academic learning, play appears to support the abilities that underlie such learning and thus to promote school success” (Copple and Bredekamp 2009b, 15). There are many reasons why children should play at home and at school. Play develops:

- Social skills and self-regulation
- Abilities to problem solve
- Oral language
- Creativity
- Knowledge and skills

Teacher scaffolding of *mature* (imaginative, creative) *play* supports specific literacy skill development such as oral language and phonological awareness. It also supports student self-regulation and successful school adjustment (Bodrova and Leong, 2004). See Chapter 8, page 205, “Play Plans Before and After Centers.”

Judith Schickedanz says it best: “We will not have done our best for young children if we deny them the path to learning they seek through play. But, we also will not have done our best if we fail to provide instruction. As much as it is true that young children play and discover many things on their own, it is also true that children need adult assistance or guidance. It is possible to preserve childhood and to give children access to academic skills” (1994, 46).



Figure 1.6

Warming our hands over the campfire at the camping center.