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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).