



All Play All Day: Celebrate International Day of Play

By Annie Lougheed

What is the International Day of Play?

“United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating June 11 as the first-ever International Day of Play. The resolution recognizes the importance of play in promoting education, development, and the well-being of children around the world.” -The Genius of Play

Why an International Day of Play?

“According to LEGO’s “Play Well Study 2024,” on average, three in five children would like to play more than they do now, while four in five children would like to play more with their parents or caregiver. The research also shows that eight in ten children say adults don’t always think playing is important and seven in ten don’t believe adults take play — and how it can help them learn — seriously.” - The Genius of Play

What is Play?

Play is the foundation of children’s learning. Some of the characteristics of play are:

- Self chosen and/or self directed
- Process oriented rather than product or goal oriented
- Actively engaging and enjoyable
- Involves creativity and imagination and is not restricted by reality or instruction



“When children are engaged and are active agents in designing their own play activities, they develop a positive attitude toward learning. Children who are able to construct their play enjoy a sense of mastery in their environments, and are able to sustain their play with great concentration. The Early Childhood Educator’s role is to continually observe children in their play, guide children when necessary, scaffold their learning, and adapt the learning environment to provide a rich source of inspiration for children’s exploration and inquiry.” (p.19, PEI Early Learning Framework).

Why is Play so important?

Play provides for all areas of a child’s development! Here are just a few ways play supports children’s development:

- Cognitive: skills such as developing language, reasoning, memory, as well as foundational mathematical and scientific concepts.
- Physical: developing eye-hand coordination, spatial awareness, core strength, fine motor skills, and balance.
- Social and Emotional: develop problem solving, cooperating with others, sharing ideas, task perseverance, as well as recognizing and managing emotions.



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How do we provide more opportunities for Play?

We need to make sure we are planning our day to include the appropriate conditions that support play.

These include:

- Large uninterrupted blocks of time. Sometimes it can take time to get engaged into play, and children might be unsure about what to do. You can offer choices and make sure there is ample time for play (minimum of 30 minutes of uninterrupted and unscheduled play time).
- Provide open-ended materials to enhance play. Interesting loose parts help spark ideas and encourage creativity! When we provide enough open-ended materials, in an organized and intentional way, then children are more likely to become interested and engage with the materials.
- An adult nearby. The adult doesn't have to be involved in the action all the time but does need to be a source of stability in the play situation.



Looking for some fun play Ideas:

- Creative exploration: Provide a variety of open ended materials to inspire creativity such as: tape, scissors, assorted paper, stickers, elastics, recycled materials at home such as paper towel rolls, boxes and egg cartons. Anything can be used in process oriented art! Look around your space for loose materials, and maybe even check out the recycling bin!
- Playdough and loose parts: All you need is playdough and a few loose parts from around the house. Items will vary depending on your children's ages. I like including buttons, gems, pipe cleaners, kitchen tools like garlic press or potato masher. It can be an easy set up with many different ways to play. If you are worried about the mess, try using a mat, tray or putting wax paper down first to help contain the playdough.
- Outdoor play bin: Combine a variety of items that will inspire active outdoor movement and play such as different sized balls, pylons, wood pieces, buckets, shovels, rake, ribbons, natural loose parts such as pine cones and rocks. Free time to explore these materials can lead to amazing opportunities!
- Save yourself a headache and plan ahead for where you might store all of these materials when children are done playing! Storage baskets, containers with labels and storage carts/trolleys will be your best friend when it comes time to put these fun materials away. For example, you can have a tote dedicated to playdough tools, and a storage container specifically for smaller materials like buttons. The more organized you are the easier it will be to reach for these as you provide play opportunities for children.



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People of all ages can benefit from Play!

When was the last time you did something that was self-chosen, self-directed, enjoyable and with no end-goal? I think we could all benefit from the power of play.

Want to know how members of the ECDA team engages in play?

- Camping, hiking, biking, gardening, charcuterie nights, playing with pets, beach time, reading for fun, colouring, process art crafting, singing, dancing, wrestling, listening to audiobooks and building with clay and playdough!

Whatever you do today, have fun, and most importantly... remember to play!

All the best,
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