



the discovery center

August 2018

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

It's hard to believe that summer is already coming to a close. While we still have a few weeks of summer remaining, the staff and I are eagerly preparing for the start of the new school year in September.

You can help us get ready by:

1-Being sure to notify us if any of the telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day have changed. Is the emergency contact person listed on your child's emergency card still available? Other changes we might need to know about?

2-Checking the extra clothes you have at school for your child and bringing additions for the fall.

3-Keeping your child's teachers informed of changes in his/her abilities. Did your preschooler surprise you by learning how to climb to the top of a play structure? Count to 20? Tie her shoe?

4-Reminding your child that only adults should open doors at The Discovery Center.

5-Getting your child back into a regular sleep routine. Summer often means different routines and schedules (or lack thereof!). Re-establish a regular bedtime and morning routine.

Hope the remainder of the summer is relaxing and fun filled!

—Debbie



HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS TO TRY AT HOME

Try one of these low-fat, healthy snacks at home:

- *Fresh fruit (put in the freezer for a yummy treat).
- *Graham crackers with soy butter or sun butter. Add apple slices and cinnamon.
- *Tortilla chips and salsa with assorted veggies.
- *Popcorn (add flavors like chili powder, grated cheese, or cinnamon).
- *Yogurt with fruit and crunchy cereal.
- *Vegetables and low fat dip.
- *Orange Fun-pops...orange juice and vanilla yogurt frozen in ice cube trays.



Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, August 7th All School Reptiles and Amphibians of Michigan presentation
- Thursday, August 9th All School Camping Day--planned by Purple Room
- Thursday, August 16th All School Pirate Day--planned by Orange Room
- Friday, August 31st The Discovery Center is Closed for Our Annual Staff Day
- Monday, September 3rd The Discovery Center is Closed for the Labor Day Holiday
- Tuesday, September 4th The beginning of the new school year!



Can Playing Prepare Children For Academic Success?

Imagine yourself standing just inside the doorway of a typical early childhood classroom. To your right, a group of children are playing with cars and trucks. Across the room a little girl has just taken a tub a Legos from the shelf. In front of you, two boys are about to make pretend birthday cakes with playdough. And to your left, a group is gathered around the sand table, digging and pouring. It all looks like fun, but will it help them get ready for elementary school? The answer is YES! The connection between play and later school success is strong, but often underestimated. It's sometimes easier to see how play supports physical or social/emotional development than how it builds a foundation for academic skills. But it does. And here are only a few examples:

Cars and Trucks—Figure-Ground Discrimination—the ability to pick out and concentrate on one item and separate it from the background. Arranging cars on a play mat in preschool, for example, builds a foundation for later being able to see a letter as part of a word or word as a meaningful part of a sentence. *Visual Tracking—the ability to follow the movement of an object with one's eyes and guide it with one's hand.* Practice in driving a toy truck along a road made of blocks helps to develop the coordination needed for guiding a pencil along a piece of paper. *Grouping—the ability to figure out what characteristic several objects have in common.* A child sorts through all the vehicles, searching for metal racing cars, rather than, say, plastic or wooden ones is preparing for mathematical set theory.

Shelf Toys (Legos, pegboards, beads, etc.) - Seriation—the ability to determine what comes next in a series. A child creating a predictable sequence with blocks or beads is practicing a valuable math skill needed for understanding number patterns. *Constancy—the ability to understand that a particular characteristic such as color or shape stays the same, even when other characteristics change.* A child stringing beads soon discovers that round beads are always round no matter what their color or size. That paves the way for understanding that "A" and "a" are all the same letter. *Control of muscles in fingertips.* Toys that must be fitted together, arranged, and taken apart offer opportunities for strengthening and developing the muscles that will eventually be used in writing.

Playdough—Matching—the ability to recognize how things correspond. A child who cuts a playdough shape with a cookie cutter and fits the shape back into the corresponding space is practicing a pre-reading skill that will enable them to discriminate differences and similarities among letters. *Representation—the ability to see that one object can stand for or symbolize another.* Knowing that a piece of playdough can represent a piece of pizza helps develop the idea that letters on a page can also represent real life.

It all sounds pretty serious, and that's for a good reason: Play is a young child's most critical pathway to learning. If your child's school provides plenty of time, materials, and support for play, you can relax. They understand how young children learn.

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