

# Play in K

Lifelong learning begins with play. Play uses exploration, imagination, and inquiry to develop cognitive and social-emotional skills and the confidence to engage in new experiences. Play is a valuable and evidence-based teaching practice for all early learning environments, including kindergarten and beyond.

*See below for examples of different ways that play supports instruction of kindergarten standards. There are many different learning opportunities in each play based activity! Can you identify other knowledge and skills children are learning in these examples?*

## Child Directed Play

Child-directed play is chosen and led by the child. The child develops the rules and guidelines of the play in an environment to facilitate independent learning. Through observation, the adult learns about the child's abilities and interests and can design individualized lessons to further development and learning.

By playing with manipulatives, like blocks, learners are able to recognize and compare 2D and 3D shapes identified in the kindergarten standards. They apply their knowledge of geometric vocabulary through collaboration and communicating their plans and ideas.





Providing space for learners to freely write and draw allows them to share their personal perspective and voice, explore artistic ideas through intentional play, and refine their fine motor skills. By engaging in a variety of writing projects, they develop an understanding of procedural steps, sequencing a part of the writing and illustrating process, and writing with a purpose.

## Guided Play

Guided play is led by the child, with engagement from the adult. The adult engages in the play, asks questions, and models skills and behaviors to encourage deeper thinking and knowledge building.

Dramatic play offers important opportunities for integrated learning across all kindergarten standard content areas. Learners work together to plan, draft, revise and strengthen written work, including numerical representation and early equations. Through guided drama experiences learners have a safe space to practice emotional awareness and self expression.



In addition to important opportunities for physical activity and refining large and small motor skills, learners playing together outside will explore many scientific concepts like size, weight, and motion. Adults provide support and guidance in scientific discovery, vocabulary building, and teamwork.



## Teacher Directed Play

Teacher-directed play is teacher-planned and led in a way that engages the child and supports academic growth. The adult communicates the play's structure and provides guidelines to follow.



Kindergarten standards across all content areas can be developed through play-based activities like matching and sorting games. Learners build observation skills by paying close attention to the game materials and content, classification and categorization skills through grouping items and recognizing relationships, and self-regulation skills by listening for and following agreed upon rules and directions.

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