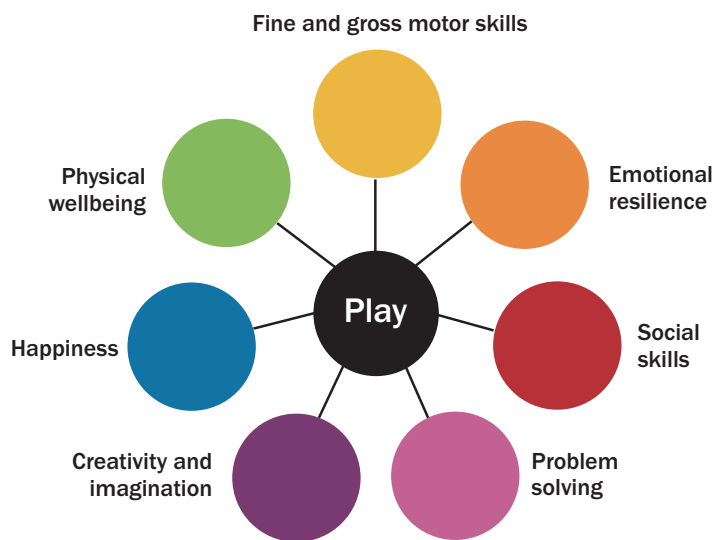


Play-based Learning

Play is the medium through which students learn about themselves and the world, and at Avenues, it is prioritized as a key to child development. Avenues' early childhood curriculum is designed to promote competency and the mastery of developmental skills.



Play-based Learning at Avenues

- Teachers create environments conducive to certain types of play, by selecting open-ended materials, toys and objects that trigger curiosity and spark imagination.
- During daily “center” time, students in the Early Learning Center (ELC) rotate through different stations set up around the classroom, each
- During play, teachers extend children’s experience by asking questions and providing children with new language and concepts to build understanding and solve problems.
- Teachers continually observe children as they play, noting the development of each child’s interests and strengths, and identifying opportunities for growth.

Type of play	Materials	Outcomes
Expressive	Crayons, chalk, pencils, paint	Fosters creativity, confidence and emotional wellbeing
Constructive	Wooden blocks, tunnels, arches	Connects children to their environment and teaches them how to manipulate the physical world
Sensory	Clay, sand, water, light tables	Builds nerve connections in the brain, enhances fine motor skills
Pretend	Costumes, props, kitchen sets	Enhances creativity and cognitive flexibility, builds empathy, develops vocabulary
Social	Card games, board games	Develops collaboration, cooperation and empathy
Physical	Tricycles, slides, climbing frames, balls	Develops gross and fine muscle strength; the integration of muscles, nerves and brain function; coordination and balance; prevents obesity

“Play is not a luxury but a rather crucial dynamic of healthy physical, intellectual and social-emotional development at all age levels.”

David Elkind, Child psychologist



Play by the Numbers

30+

Number of open-ended materials in each ELC classroom

90

% of a child's brain development that occurs by the age of 5

200

Average number of wooden blocks in each ELC classroom

6

Number of tricycles parked in the ELC's outdoor playground

150

Pounds of sand purchased for sensory play in the ELC each year

42

% by which children who engage in regular outdoor play are more likely to be a healthy weight

"We understand the vital importance of play as it provides a natural integration between all the critical brain functions and learning domains. But creating environments where children learn through play is not a simple thing to do consistently and do well. In the ELC, it's one of our top priorities, and we make sure our teachers have the resources and support they need to accomplish that goal."

Nancy Schulman, Head of the Early Learning Center

According to Research

"Developmentally appropriate play [...] is a singular opportunity to promote the social-emotional, cognitive, language, and self-regulation skills that build executive function and a prosocial brain."

– From "The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children" published in the journal Pediatrics in August 2018

Play is essential for healthy brain development

Play has been shown to enhance levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that our brains need to develop healthy connections. ("The Power of Play")

Play boosts academic performance

After observing 65 kindergarteners over four weeks, a researcher at the University of Georgia found that pretend play improved children's performance in pre-reading and writing. ("The relationship between kindergarteners' play and achievement in pre-reading, language and writing," A.D. Pellegrini, October 1980)

Play helps children manage stress

A yearlong study of preschoolers found that children who played regularly with a teacher had lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) and better behavior than the control group. ("The Power of Play")

Play builds emotional resilience and regulation

A New Zealand study found that when a negative event was induced during play, children who had experienced more pretend play were better at regulating their emotions to continue playing. ("Pretend Play and the Development of Emotion Regulation in Preschool Children," Karma T. Galyer and Ian M. Evans, Early Child Development and Care, February 2001)

