

# Learning Through Play - The Co-op Philosophy

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In the cooperative preschool, a focus is placed on developmentally appropriate learning through play strategies with an emphasis on cooperative play (as age appropriate) where two or more children learn how to interact, problem-solve, and make decisions together.

Children in cooperatively structured, learning through play environments exhibit higher levels of pro-social behavior (sharing, dramatic play, cooperation, positive interactions) than children in traditional-structured classrooms.

## **In pre-planned, "learning through play" environments:**

Language skills are developed as children discuss issues of play with each other or discuss their drawing, paintings, craft projects, or experiments with adults and each other.

Math skills are practiced in the play "store", "restaurant", or "office" and through games, projects, blocks and other manipulatives.

Science is learned through natural curiosity and experiments with snow, dirt, sand, water, etc. in the sensory table. Leaves, nests, insects, magnets, magnifying glasses, etc. and picture books are strategically placed on the science table and discussed throughout the day.

## **Developmentally Appropriate Programs**

Cooperative programs are developmentally appropriate programs that focus on allowing children to learn, grow and experience in their own way in their own time through play.

Developmentally appropriate programs consider the "stages" and needs of child development:

Two year olds need large muscle development and love to run, jump, climb and explore widely and wildly.

Three year olds have a rich fantasy life (a dress up area is a must), begin mastering small hand movements, following directions, talking in full sentences, playing more sociably, and exhibiting longer attention spans. They need more independence.

By age four, curiosity and enthusiasm about everything blossoms with an increased interest in sorting, matching, classifying, hands-on experiments, songs, games, circle time and openly sharing ideas and expressing opinions.