



It's Not "Just" Play

By Teacher Ami

I find myself continually learning about how we work. What makes us tick? Humans are motivated by many things: love, curiosity and basic needs are just a few. These motivations also lead us to the values we wish our children to develop. We want our kids (and the adults they will become) to be motivated by belonging, learning, meaning, purpose, mastery, autonomy and their dreams. These motivations naturally lead us to explore and learn about the world we live in.

The richest type of education is an education that you care about and feel connected to. We want our children to be thoroughly engaged, not to just comply. Through play, they begin to develop awareness of what motivates them. When children play, they develop cognitive, social-emotional and physical skills they will need to successfully navigate their way through life. In the early years, children's work lies in play, and play continues to be beneficial to us throughout life.

Seattle is leading the research on children's brain development. As parents, we see the level of engagement and pleasure our child has during play, yet many of us feel the pressure of conflicting opinions. I'll just let you all know right now – you are doing an amazing job at supporting your child's development and education by getting down on their level, showing interest and playing with them. The list of research, data and articles about the importance of play is long. In our handbook and article on page 18 outlines children's need to play, and on page 24 another talks about the misguided ideas of teaching "academics" to

young children. Both of these articles are insightful, thought provoking and well worth your time to read.

We played a lot this month as we reflected on what a family is and the change of the season. We shared our family photos. Who is in your family? How are our families similar and different?

- **Leandro** told us "jeh jeh" is Cantonese for older sister.
- **Linus** taught us that "noona" is Korean for older sister. He was also quick to add, "I have five people in my family!"
- "I have three grandmas" - **Stella**.
- "I have a Nana too!" - **Nathalie**.

The book and play, Riki Tiki Tavi, lent itself to one of our favorite ways to pretend to be – animals! We had cat families with faces carefully painted, and we talked about families who have pets to care for.



As **Nolan, Darian** and **Sam** were playing a family game where Darian was their pet squirrel, "Oh no! We're out of nuts!" "No, it's ok" Nolan said as he took care of Darian.



Stella and **Nathalie** enjoyed being worms in warm tunnel homes.

We did a lot of sorting of animals into families by color or species.



Zoie and **Wolf** spent time playing together, and figured out that their families had a lot in common.

"I have two fish and one bunny" said Zoie

"I have that too!" said Wolf.

Frankie carried his family of green animals around in a basket to keep them "safe".



This play led naturally to the exploration of homes.

We built them with blocks, made them out of tee-pee's and in cozy spaces.

We talked about the parts of a home and what they are made of.



- **Kaemon** built a castle out of soft blocks and shared his idea about how he wanted it to be treated.
- **William** and **Anya** put toy animals in the pet home, seeing how many could fit.

Often times, we had to negotiate.

Wolf: "This is my home ... but you can come in"

Lily: "I want to tape this up"

Wolf: "Okay"

Families and homes tied in nicely with baby play. We washed, dressed, walked, sung to, fed and talked about all the things that babies might need. We read *101 Things to do With a Baby* (by Jam Ormerod) and **Fiona** thought



about things she can do with her baby sister, Rosalia. We sang the "Now It's Time to Go to Sleep" song. Some ideas of what might help the baby were "Milk!" (**Azurez**) and "a boat!" (**Graham**).

Frankie and **Anya** carried baby dolls with them at school all day long. We were introduced to Frankie's new baby sister, Ramona, at circle time and got to touch her feet.



In the Art Room we sprayed plants,

spread and scooped shaving cream, sprinkled glitter and glue, did lots of easel painting and squished our hands in pumpkin guts. We worked hard painting a big cardboard house. **Frankie** figured out that



if you paint the inside of

the house, you would get

paint on your coat. We prepared for Seattle rain by decorating umbrellas,



and took them outside where we felt the wind pull on them. We planted bulbs and talked about what will happen in the spring.



Learning to take turns is a hard skill to master. We got a lot of practice negotiating who got to use things, how much space our bodies needed and how much time felt fair. We practiced being helpful by showing others where to find their



own pair of wings or baby doll if they tried to take ours. **Ryann** even showed **Ivy** how to put wings on.





We practiced listening and self-control by playing red light/green light while pushing each other around in the cart. **Emmett, Henry, Lyra** and **Olive** showed creative thinking and problem solving as they took a ride in their "family van."

The cart also gave plenty of opportunity to practice negotiating.

"Is there room for Jiraiya?"

Wolf: "Right here! This is a fire engine."

Lily: "No! This is a train because I have tickets!"

Teacher Ami: "Can I buy a ticket for a ride on a fire engine?"

All: "No! You're too big!!!"

Darian: "I'm pushing. We are out of gas."

Addie: "We want to buy some gas!"



in the ravine!"



Being a part of a community, a family and a co-op is truly a wonderful way to support the values and needs of our children and ourselves. I am so proud to have our **Teacher Jana** defending the importance of play to the Seattle School District. She has taken a petition signed by hundreds of parents to the school board asking for longer recess time for all school age children. In the past few years, recess has continually been shortened to make time for "academic" learning. Ask her about it and sign the petition! Together we can make a change. All children deserve the chance to play, learn and hone skills as they self-actualize.



I am so glad to be on this journey with all of you. As Jean Piaget said, "Play is the work of childhood."



Our outside time was full of worm digging, water play, treasure hunting, hole digging, and experiments with gravity, motion, momentum and inertia. Many objects such as

chestnuts, wood disks, water and dirt have traveled down our gutter ramps. When the tire swing was not going fast enough,

Linus had an idea on how to solve the problem:

"We can take a rope and tie it around the shark



Community Events

Just Between Friends Kids Consignment Sale

when: Nov 14 - Nov 16 at various times
where: Metropolitan Banquet Hall, 16420 S.E. 128th St., Renton, Wa
link: www.seattle.jbfsale.com/homeView.jsp

Reindeer Festival @ Swanson's Nursery

when: Nov 14 - Dec 24 at 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
where: Ballard, Swanson's Nursery, 9701 15th Ave. N.W.
link: swansonnursery.com/events-projects/christmas/

MIPA Toy Swap

when: Nov 15 at 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
where: Mercer Island Middle School, 8225 S.E. 72nd St., Mercer Island
link: mipreschoolassociation.org/toyswap/

Pratt Holiday Art Sale

when: Nov 21 - Nov 30 at 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
where: Pratt Fine Arts Center, 1902 S. Main St.
link: www.pratt.org/2014_has/

Family Movie Night: Free Birds

when: Nov 21 at 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
where: Mount Baker Community Club, 2811 Mount Rainier Dr. S.
link: www.mountbaker.org

Festival of Trees

when: Nov 22 - Dec 3
where: Fairmont Olympic Hotel, 411 University Street
link: www.seattlefestivaloftrees.com/3/miscellaneous8.htm

Eli Rosenblatt- Silly songs that celebrate life and joy

when: Nov 22, 10:30 am
where: Mount Baker Community Club
link: www.mountbaker.org

Toddler Time at the Seattle Aquarium

when: November 24 & 25, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
where: Seattle Aquarium, 1483 Alaskan Way, Pier 59
link: www.seattleaquarium.org/camps-family-programs

Seattle public libraries: Lego Mania!

when: Sunday, November 16, 2014 1:30 - 4:30 pm
where: Capitol Hill Branch

when: Sunday, November 23, 2014 2-4 pm
where: Madrona/Sally Goldmark Branch
link: www.spl.org

Greet the Season

when: Nov 29 at 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
where: South Lake Union, MOHAI, 860 Terry Ave. N.
link: www.mohai.org





FAMILY ART

Chilly, wet fall days are a great time to sit down and create some fun and messy memories.



www.scholastic.com

Materials Needed:

White construction paper
Red, orange, yellow, and brown paint
Thin paintbrushes
Glue
Googly eyes



www.craftymorning.com

Materials Needed:

Brown, white, orange, yellow, and red paper
Glue/Tape/Stapler
Black marker



Materials Needed:

Tree branch
Brown, yellow, red, orange paper
Marker
Glue or glue gun
Small container
Pebbles or sand



www.thediymommy.com

