

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

-DR. JENNIFER SHOUFFLER



# WHAT IS PLAY?

- Play is critical to the health and development of children and adults.
- Play is a way children learn about themselves, their environment, and people around them
- Through play, children learn how to process and make sense out of what they see, hear, touch, taste, smell.
- Play relieves stress and boredom.
- Play helps to connect people in positive ways.
- Plays stimulates creativity, regulates emotions, and boosts confidence.



# BENEFITS OF PLAY

## Physical Development:

- Gross Motor Skills through running, climbing, and balancing.
- Fine Motor Skills through building and playing with small toys.

## Cognitive Development:

- Solve problems through play
- Counting and sorting
- Enhance memory skills and improve perseverance
- Language skills through interactions and talk

## Social Skills

- Opportunities for cooperation, listening, negotiating

## Self-Efficacy

- People can influence what happens in life by the actions they take
- They can take control of themselves and their environment
- Making choices



# VYGOTSKY'S THEORIES

Vygotsky: Socio-cultural theory of learning- we learn through interactions with others.

1970's

- Make-believe play is a major activity in development for children ages 2 through 5
- Play creates a **Zone of Proximal Development** because children play “a head taller than themselves”
- When children pretend to be adults- parents, teachers, workers- they use more sophisticated language and model grown-up behavior
- Socio-dramatic play promotes taking on others' perspective

# REACTIONS TO THESE THEORIES

## Internationally:

- Finland- students go outside rain or shine, unstructured play, 15 minutes per hour
- Japan- 10 minute breaks after 40 minutes of class, outside free play without supervision, focus on balance activities

## Nationally

- New Jersey- This year requires 20 minutes of recess K-5 each school day, outside if possible.



# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are children's first and best playmates.

- **Observe:** Look to see what your child can and cannot do. What skill are they working on? What are their favorite activities?
- **Follow:** Join in and play with your child to show interest what they are doing
- **Be Creative:** Use toys in new ways. Enjoy.



# TOYS ARE TOOLS

Stuffed Animals and Dolls: Young children can practice their social skills and model how they see others interact and care for each other.

Blocks: Develop many skills in mathematics though building, sorting, counting, measuring.



# MAKE TIME FOR PLAY

