

Constructive Play

Last you read about functional or repetitive play. The next level of play is constructive play that involves imagination, motor planning and materials of most any sort. Constructive play usually emerges around 2 to 3 years and is an essential building block in a child's development. Now the child manipulates objects with a goal in mind using higher levels of thought. His or her play moves from experimenting with materials in a repetitive, motor play to using materials to represent something. Building blocks up and knocking them down changes to building blocks up to be a house or a rocket. Constructive play involves manipulation of materials to create something. Children begin to use materials and plan for a finished product. Intellectual processes are used as a child solves problems, retrieves earlier memories and experiences and then constructs what he has imagined.

Watch children in the sand box as they make a cake or make soup, even using the darker wet sand and the white, dry sand to represent parts of the final product. The bench becomes the oven and they slide it under to cook. They might make a mountain or a castle with windows, a flag and roads, Often children are working together and sharing ideas and enthusiasm for the project. We can listen to the conversation as they add bits of sticks, leaves etc to enhance the creation. One idea leads to another and children learn to listen, cooperate and problem solve.

At the art table, play dough table and the block corner creative, constructive play is taking place in every room. Blocks bring experiences with comparison of size and shape, and of course gravity. If we put the smaller ones at the bottom what happens at the top? He experiments with simple machines like a ramp and mapping skills when she plans the environment. Constructive play differs from purely motor play in that children are using materials with a plan in mind. It allows children to control their environment- they choose, construct, discard and build. There is a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment as they continually change the way they use materials. Language evolves as the child uses words as he works. Constructive play is infectious! Others join and verbally share ideas and describe what they're seeing.

This is play that develops skills, creates a sense of control and helps develop positive self esteem. Children feel good about what they've done.