



*I hear & I forget-see & I remember-I do and I understand-Chinese proverb...Children have to involve their bodies as well as their minds in order to understand the world & experiences. If he may not engage his body, As well as his mind, he will switch off. Ambron...Childhood should be a Journey-Not a Race...Childhood is life's 1<sup>st</sup> gift. Play it for all it's worth. Play it often, Play to know: Discovery, wonderment &delight. All children are gifted. Some just open their presents later.  
Sources Unknown*

*We see the world clearly when we are children, then spend the rest of our lives trying to remember what we saw. G. Keillor*

## **Birds & Fish & Cows: Oh My!**

As I enter my eighth decade, I see much in the world has changed. But as far as young children are concerned, nothing has changed. Children need to play. Their needs and developmental milestones, have not changed in 100 years. We need to stop trying to change the way that they learn. Don't get me started.

Children need to know love, safety & trust, to be read and sung to, open ended process art, opportunities to problem solve & take risks, know emotional well-being & social competence. The current emphasis on the academics rushes children before brains are ready and is just not in their best interest. The media encourages us to make children smarter faster, but studies have shown, it doesn't work. Shouldn't childhood be a journey? What's the rush?

I am thrilled to see outdoor/forest schools sprouting up across the country. Children need to play. We need to get chairs out of the early childhood classroom and children outside playing. What makes us think, makes us move. Every minute a young child sits in a chair is one less minute of creativity and learning.

Worksheets waste precious time in childhood. Children can know their ABCs upside down, backwards and forwards, inside and out, but if they don't feel good about themselves, aren't able to self-regulate, nurture their creativity, take risks or cannot get along with their peers, the academics will not serve them well.

It is up to us, to let the children play. Sing and read with them, provide materials for process art, write down their stories and tape record their songs. Turn off devices and turn to the children. They desperately need their childhood and we are taking it away sooner and sooner.

Hopefully, you are seeing lots of pretend play in your center/home/classroom and you will likely see children pretending to be animals, birds, insects. Make believe is an integral part of early childhood. Besides being fun, imaginative play may be critical to healthy child development.

Research supports the impact of pretend play on cognition, creativity, empathy for others and social competence.

*Crawling/walking, rolling in both directions, jumping, spinning, skipping is reading readiness. Blaydes Madigan*

## **What Happens During Make Believe Play**

- Make believe play can reflect what children have on their minds. Social development is nurtured behaving as someone or something else and a chance to explore the world and think about two ways of being at once.

- Part of a child's developing social skills. If a child is pretending to be a dog, she needs to figure out how to communicate with the "owner" without speaking.
- Learning the art of negotiation. Consider own behavior to send clear messages and pay attention to messages from peers. May spend as much time negotiating as enacting.
- To foster perspective-taking, empathy, negotiations skills and cooperation, how lessons related to these skills are embedded in materials, themes and general content of children's imaginative play.

*Source: Why make-believe play is an important part of childhood development. T. Gleason*

<https://theconversation.com/why-make-believe-play-is-an-important-part-of-childhood-development-49693>

Through the years I see children drawn to animal puppets, stuffed animals, books about animals, often becoming the animals in their play. What is it about animals? What better way to celebrate childhood, than to support their love of creatures, large and small and nurture their play with song and music.

### Why Do Children Love Animals?

There is something about fuzzy, warm wet-nosed animals that appeals to children. The bonds they develop are critical as they learn to love, share, and empathize. From a very young age, children find animals fascinating and often develop special relationships with them.

*E. McNew-PJ Library Program <https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/july-2012/why-do-children-love-animals>*

Many of a baby's earliest words will represent animals. "More than a third of babies first words are animal names."

*L. Acredolo-Blog Why Kids Love Animals. <https://babysignsinc.blogspot.com/2011/09/why-kids-love-animals.html>*

**Remember my motto. When all else fails, try Singing & Dancing.  
It really works. No expertise needed!**

*Activity guide for art, music, science and much more on Web site-Workshop Handouts page*

*Suggestions for Drama-Let children make up stories, add movement, props, music and instruments*

*Most songs can be found on the Sing With Me Cds. If not, words are on handout, email me for recording.*

