



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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### Play is an Important Part of Early Childhood Development

By Wendy Overturf

Often when parents ask their preschool child what they did in school their response is "I played." While your child may have done other activities, play is an important part of preschool programs. Fred Rogers, famously known as Mr. Rogers, shared many insightful and heartwarming thoughts on the importance of play in the lives of children. Here are a few of his memorable quotes on the subject:

- "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."
- "Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning."
- "It's the things we play with and the people who help us play that make a great difference in our lives."

Play is a vital aspect of learning and development, especially for children. Here are some ways how play functions as an effective learning activity:

**Cognitive Development:** Play helps children understand the world around them. Through play, children learn to solve problems, think creatively, and develop reasoning and cognitive abilities. Simple activities like building with blocks or playing with puzzles enhance spatial awareness, pattern recognition, and problem-solving skills.

**Language Skills:** Playful activities, especially those involving others, encourage language development. Children learn new words, practice conversation, and develop storytelling skills through imaginative play and interaction.

**Social and Emotional Development:** Play is crucial for developing social skills such as sharing, taking turns, cooperating, negotiating, and empathizing with others. Role-playing games, for example, can teach children how to express and manage emotions, understand others' perspectives, and develop empathy.

**Physical Development:** Physical play activities like running, jumping, and climbing are important for developing motor skills, coordination, and physical fitness. Such activities also teach children about their bodies' capabilities and limits, promoting a sense of body awareness and confidence.

**Creativity and Imagination:** Play allows children to use their creativity and imagination. Engaging in imaginative play, such as pretending, storytelling, or creating art, encourages creative thinking and innovation. These activities help children to explore different scenarios, roles, and ideas, enhancing their creativity and ability to generate unique solutions to problems.

**Emotional Resilience:** Through play, children learn to cope with feelings like frustration, anger, or fear. They can practice self-regulation, understand their emotions, and learn how to respond to different situations.

**Learning by Doing:** Play is a form of experiential learning. Children learn best when they are actively engaged and having fun. Through hands-on activities, they can experiment, explore, and discover new things, leading to a deeper understanding of concepts and ideas.

**Social Interaction and Collaboration:** Group play activities promote social interaction and teamwork. Children learn to collaborate, communicate, and work together towards a common goal, which are essential skills for their future.

**Encourages Curiosity and Exploration:** Play naturally stimulates curiosity and exploration. Children are more likely to engage with and learn from activities that they find enjoyable and interesting.

While play might appear random to adults, there are 6 stages of play that children progress through as part of their development. Researcher Mildred Parten identified the 6 stages of play, at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development. Be sure to check this [to view the stages as well as learn how to support your child's growth](#) at each stage.

**Videos related to the 6 Stages of Play.**

- [How Children Learn to Play: Parten's 6 Stages of Play](#)
- [Parten's 6 Stages of Play in Childhood, Explained!](#)

[Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards-Interest Areas: Children Learn from Play, \(pages 102-104\)](#) also has suggestions on materials and activities that promote play. Also check the video on the Wisconsin Department of Instruction website ["Play is the Way."](#)

In summary, play is an essential element of childhood development and is integral to a child's growth in every aspect. It is not just about fun; it is a critical part of learning and development. It is important to note that these milestones are guidelines, not strict timelines. Each child develops at their own pace, and a range of differences is considered normal. If you have concerns about your child's development, one of your first resources should be your child's pediatrician.

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## UPCOMING WI FACETS EVENTS

[WSEMS: Dispute Resolution Options-Prerecorded](#)

**Date:** March 4, 2024

[Supporting Families in Navigating Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation](#)

**Presenters:** Dawn Merth-Johnson, Iris Jacobson, and Rose Kilmurray

**Date:** March 6, 2024

[IEP 1: Conceptos básicos de educación especial](#)

**Presenter:** Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

**Date:** March 7, 2024

**[Finding Gold in the People Around You](#)**

**Presenter:** Tim Markle, Forgiveness Factor

**Date:** March 13, 2024

**[Sirviendo en grupos: Herramientas & Consejos y estrategias grupales \(Secciones 4 & 5\)](#)**

**Presenter:** Alejandra Loeza, WI FACETS

**Date:** March 14, 2024

**[Section 504: What Parents and Students Need to Know](#)**

**Presenter:** Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

**Date:** March 19, 2024

**[Balancing Behavior with Relational Attunement](#)**

**Presenter:** Erica Scheifflee, Speech/Language Pathologist (private practice)

**Date:** March 20, 2024

**[IEP 2: Proceso de remisión en educación especial](#)**

**Presenter:** Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

**Date:** March 21, 2024

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## HOME LEARNING



**[Children's Activity Calendar: March 2024](#)**

Spring into March with engaging activities, craft projects, and book suggestions. Celebrate Read Across America Day, share stories about inspiring women during International Women's Day, and get kids excited about math during Pi Day, World Math Day, and much more.



### Family Reading

Reading to your child daily offers many benefits that significantly contribute to their overall development and well-being:

**Language Development:** Reading aloud exposes children to a rich variety of words, helping expand their vocabulary. It also introduces them to sentence structures and grammar, aiding in language acquisition.

**Cognitive Skills:** Regular reading sessions enhance cognitive abilities such as attention span, concentration, and memory. It stimulates brain development and encourages critical thinking skills.

**Early Literacy Skills:** It instills a love for books and reading, laying the foundation for literacy. Children

learn about letters, sounds, and how text flows from left to right, which are crucial pre-reading skills.

**Bonding and Emotional Connection:** Reading together fosters a strong emotional bond between parent/caregiver and child. It provides a special time for closeness and interaction, promoting feelings of security and comfort.

**Imagination and Creativity:** Books expose children to different worlds, characters, and situations, sparking their imagination and creativity. They learn to visualize and explore new ideas and perspectives.

**Social and Emotional Development:** Stories often explore emotions, morals, and social situations, helping children understand and navigate their feelings and relationships.

**Preparation for School:** Children who are read to regularly tend to perform better academically once they start school. They are more likely to have a positive attitude towards learning and reading.

**Relaxation and Stress Reduction:** Reading can serve as a calming and soothing activity, helping children relax and unwind before bedtime or during stressful times.

\* **Reading Rockets** offers a comprehensive guide called "[Reading 101: A Guide for Parents](#)" which includes various resources to support your child's growth as a reader.

## March 10, 2024 - Daylight Saving Time Starts (set clocks ahead one hour)

Reading aloud can be a wonderful way to explain and explore the concept of daylight saving time with children. Here are several books that can be great for read-aloud sessions to introduce or discuss daylight saving time:

[Daylight Saving Time for Kids](#)  
[What is Daylight Saving Time?](#)  
[Daylight Savings Time – Kids News Break](#)



### Elapsed Time Activities

**Timeline Creation:** Create a timeline of the day's events using pictures or drawings. Label the start and end times of different activities. Discuss the duration of each activity by calculating the elapsed time between them.

**Daily Routine Practice:** Use a daily routine chart and ask kids to calculate how much time is spent on each activity. For example, "What time do you wake up? How long does it take to eat breakfast?"



### Future Time Activities

**Setting Alarms or Timers:** Ask kids to predict and set alarms or timers for various activities (e.g., "Set the timer for 30 minutes. What time will it be when the timer goes off?").

**Planning Activities:** Have kids plan activities for the day or week and then calculate what time they will start or finish each activity.

**Calendar Exercises:** Use a calendar to discuss future events or holidays. Ask questions like, "If today is Monday, how many days until Friday?"

## UPCOMING STATE EVENTS



## [Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin 35th Annual Conference](#)

**Dates:** April 25-27, 2024

**Location:** Kalahari Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

The purpose of the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin's Annual Conference is to provide a wide range of information to those within the autism community. Their goal is to provide relevant information for attendees at all levels, including those who are new to autism and those who have years of experience.

## [Circles of Life Conference](#)

Circles of Life is Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and professionals who support them.

**Dates:** May 16-17, 2024

**Location:** Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, WI

## **Supporting Neurodiverse Students (SNS)**

The Supporting Neurodiverse Students (SNS) Professional Learning System provides learning events, virtual cohorts, coaching, resources, and technical assistance to support educators and families serving students with disability-related needs in social and emotional learning (SEL). The goal of the SNS is to support a skills-based approach to challenging behaviors that will improve a student's social understanding and emotional management skills. The SNS System provides learning opportunities with a focus on regulation, social communication, flexibility, resilience, sensory processing, and executive functioning. For more about these events and registration information, please visit the [SNS Learning Events Registration](#) webpage. Complete information about the SNS can be found at the [Supporting Neurodiverse Students Professional Learning System](#) webpage.

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# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#)

This policy statement, released jointly in November 2023 by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, re-affirms that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities and achieve their full potential.

## **Apply for the Wisconsin Youth Leadership Forum**

**Do you know a high school student with a disability who is a leader or a budding advocate? If so, please refer them to the Wisconsin Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)!**

**WHO:** High school students with disabilities who have an IEP (up to age 21)

**WHERE:** Edgewood College, Madison, WI

**WHEN:** July 7 – 12, 2024 (this is an overnight program)

**COST:** FREE to invited participants

In just one week, students will:

- Gain leadership and self-advocacy skills.
- Learn about college and career options.
- Develop a Personal Leadership Plan.
- Increase their confidence.
- Experience independent living in a safe space.
- Make connections with their state legislators, mentors, and new friends.
- Create lasting memories and have fun!

[WI YLF 2024 Print Application](#) or [WI YLF 2024 Google Application Form](#)

**Applications are due March 15th, 2024!**

**Being selected to attend the Youth Leadership Forum is a distinct honor that can go on a resume.**

## ONLINE RESOURCES: Early Childhood

### [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This website has a variety of resources related to early childhood education. It also has a link to this [webinar series](#) on inclusion and early childhood education. Additionally, if you are concerned about your child's development [this section](#) of the website has tips for parents. There are many immediate things you can do to help your child. Information on early intervention services is also provided.

### [Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program](#)

The first three years are the most important building blocks of a child's future. The Birth to 3 Program is a federally-mandated Early Intervention Program ([Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—IDEA](#)) to support families of children with developmental delays or disabilities under the age of three.

### [Significant Developmental Delay \(SDD\)](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website has information related to SDD. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams may now consider identifying SDD as a disability category for children ages 3 through 9, for both initial and reevaluations. A section on frequently asked questions related to SDD is available as well.

### [Too Small to Fail](#)

Too Small to Fail aims to help parents and businesses take meaningful actions to improve the health and well-being of children ages zero to five, so that more of America's children are prepared to succeed in the 21st century. The website has an abundance of links to resources related to children from 0-5 years of age.

### [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)

The NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with a focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for children from birth through age 8. NAEYC administers a voluntary, national accreditation system for high-quality early childhood programs, sponsors a variety of initiatives to improve professional preparation of early childhood educators, and produces a wide array of early childhood resources.

### [ZERO TO THREE](#)

Mission: ZERO TO THREE's mission is to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families. This multidisciplinary organization advances its mission by informing, educating, and supporting adults who influence the lives of infants and toddlers.

### [Wisconsin Head Start Association \(WHSA\)](#)

WHSA is made up of 39 grantees providing Head Start and Early Head Start services to families throughout Wisconsin. They serve all of Wisconsin's 72 counties and interact with 424 school districts in the state. WHSA provides comprehensive services for over 16,000 of Wisconsin's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. WHSA provides a network for information, training, advocacy, support, and action for directors, parents, and staff of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Wisconsin.

### [Get Ready to Read](#)

It is critical to help young children be ready for school by working with them to develop early literacy and learning skills. Because strong reading skills form the basis for learning in all subjects, it is important to identify those who struggle with reading as early as possible. Children who have been read to at home come to school with important early literacy skills. This site has a rich variety of useful information related to early literacy. The site also has videos and webinars of examples of how parents can promote literacy skills.

### [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Developmental Milestones](#)

Developmental milestones are a set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that most children can do at a certain age range. Your pediatrician uses milestones to help check how your child is developing. Although each



advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](mailto:WI.FACETS).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: [www.servingongroups.org/newsletter](http://www.servingongroups.org/newsletter)



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