

Things Every Parent Should Know About Play

1. Children learn through their play.

Don't underestimate the value of play. Children learn and develop:
cognitive skills: like math and problem solving in a pretend grocery store
physical abilities: like balancing blocks and running on the playground
new vocabulary: like the words they need to play with toy dinosaurs
social skills: like playing together in a pretend car wash
literacy skills: like creating a menu for a pretend restaurant

2. Play is healthy.

Play helps children grow strong and healthy. It also counteracts obesity issues facing many children today.

3. Play reduces stress.

Play helps your children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.

4. Play is more than meets the eye.

Play is simple and complex. There are many types of play: symbolic, sociodramatic, functional, and games with rules, just to name a few. Researchers study play's many aspects: how children learn through play, how outdoor play impacts children's health, the effects of screen time on play, to the need for recess in the school day.

5. Make time for play.

As parents, you are the biggest supporters of your children's learning. You can make sure they have as much time to play as possible during the day to promote cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development.

6. Play and learning go hand-in-hand.

They are not separate activities. They are intertwined. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab. Play is the child's lab.

7. Play outside.

Remember your own outdoor experiences of building forts, playing on the beach, sledding in the winter, or playing with other children in the neighborhood. Make sure your children create outdoor memories too.

8. There's a lot to learn about play.

There's a lot written on children and play. David Elkind's *The Power of Play* (Da Capo, 2007 reprint) is a great resource.

9. Trust your own playful instincts.

Remember as a child how play just came naturally? Give your children time for play and see all that they are capable of when given the opportunity.

10. Play is a child's context for learning.

Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. It gives them a place and a time for learning that cannot be achieved through completing a worksheet. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and make out checks. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and self-esteem.

Laura Bongiorno, PhD, is the director of Champlain College's graduate program in early childhood education, with specializations in teaching and administration, in Burlington, Vermont. She has taught preschool, directed early childhood programs, and studied parent perceptions of preschoolers' learning through play.

• The Learning Tree •



First United Methodist Church
Georgetown, Texas
Est. 1975

We're honored that you would consider us as a partner in providing a warm, nurturing Christian environment where your child can grow, learn, and flourish.

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(512) 863-6323

The Learning Tree

preschool at
First United Methodist Church Georgetown

www.fumcgt.org/thelearningtree



Days & Hours of Operation

August–May,
closely following
the Georgetown
ISD school calendar.

All classes meet
9:00 AM– 2:30 PM,
Monday–Thursday.

We offer 2, 3 and
4-day options.

(512) 863-6323

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First United Methodist Church
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Living Out God's Love Everywhere We Go

Curriculum

The Learning Tree bases its curriculum on the philosophy that children learn through play.

- We emphasize a “hands on” approach to learning
- We emphasize developmentally appropriate practices and help children to grow and learn at their own pace
- Classroom routines encourage active involvement and meaningful experimentation
- Class schedules balance structure and free choice, active and quiet times
- Our work emphasizes the process rather than the product
- Sensory, motor, perceptual, and language skills are introduced through materials and activities that are both child-centered and teacher-directed
- Classrooms include learning centers such as dramatic play, art, literacy, science, sensory, writing, math, and manipulatives
- Lesson plans are based on units that are relevant, understandable, and suitable for the children's age level and are capable of leading to many activities and discussions
- Music and Movement provides a variety of fine and gross motor activities, and lots of room for emotional and social growth



2023-2024 Learning Tree staff

Vision Statement

Staff and parents creating together a loving, accepting, and nurturing place for families; where children create, imagine, and grow with confidence in an environment of seemingly limitless exploration.

The Learning Tree is committed to providing your child with developmentally appropriate, hands-on learning that will instill a love of learning while teaching them the social and academic skills to prepare them for future learning success.

Below is a description of many of the centers that we have in our classroom, and how we use them to teach kindergarten readiness skills. The Learning Tree is a member of The United Methodist Association of Preschools (UMAP) and adheres to these standards of excellence.



Art Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice:

- experimentation with paint, crayons, clay, scissors, paper, and glue
- observation, creation, and completion of a project
- learning and practicing problem solving skills
- improving fine motor skills
- being creative



Block Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice:

- acceptable social skills
- problem solving skills
- fine-motor and gross-motor skills
- planning skills
- creative and imaginative play
- classification and use of various sizes/shapes



Dramatic Play Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice:

- role playing
- vocabulary
- creative and imaginative play
- social skills
- problem solving skills



Science/Discovery Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to learn about themselves, their peers, and the people in their environment by encouraging:

- problem solving and working together
- exploration of real world objects
- comparison and contrast of scientific materials
- directed inquiry activities using manipulative materials such as pictures, maps, game boards
- observing changes, making predictions, experimenting



Math Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice using concepts in mathematics through the use of manipulative materials by:

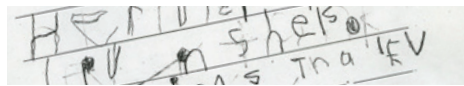
- categorizing
- sequencing
- observing, creating, completing patterns
- measuring
- counting
- making sets, matching sets



Sensory Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice skills in:

- measuring
- comparing
- performing simple experiments
- playing creatively
- hypothesizing
- sensory exposure



Writing Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice handwriting readiness by:

- becoming familiar with letter forms
- refining fine motor skills
- reproducing letters, words, phrases, sentences
- writing their own words and/or stories



Literacy Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice visual skills by:

- seeing words, phrases, and stories
- determining similarities and/or differences in written words
- becoming familiar with letter forms
- interpreting signs and symbols
- “reading” and interpreting pictures
- reading independently and cooperatively



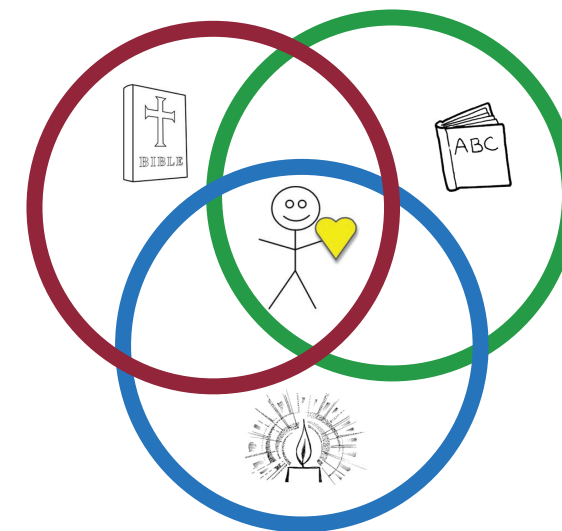
Manipulative Center

Purpose: to provide children with opportunities to develop and/or practice fine motor skills through activities which encourage:

- grasping, releasing, inserting, assembling, or disassembling
- problem solving and working together
- hand/eye coordination
- directed inquiry activities using manipulative materials
- development of concepts and generalizations through the use of manipulative materials

The Model of Sacred Circle Time

Sacred Circle Time uses the three parts of the Trinity as the basic format. God, the Creator, is a time set aside for wonder, imagination, and play. God, the Son, is a time set aside for hearing the stories of Jesus and the stories Jesus heard from the Old Testament as a child. God, the Holy Spirit, is a time set aside for the children to experience God through prayer and stillness.



Preschool Vision

To provide integrated ministry to the whole child.

Objective

Creating a safe space for the best possible educational, physical, and spiritual development of the children we serve.