

## **Let them have Play-doh!**

### *INTRODUCTION*

Are we pressuring little kids?

(Chicago Tribune article, October 20, 2002, "Kindergarten less playful as pressure to achieve grows")

"Children are not just sitting twiddling their thumbs, waiting for their parents to teach them to read and do math. They are expending a vast amount of time and effort in exploring and understanding their immediate world... Early instruction miseducates when it attempts to teach the wrong thing at the wrong time. When we ignore what the child has to learn and instead impose what we want to teach, we put infants and young children at risk for no purpose." David Elkind, Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk.

### *Myelinization and Readiness*

What is myelinization? Myelinization is a gradual developmental process whereby a protective, fatty material called myelin wraps around nerve cells in the peripheral and central nervous system. The myelin sheath protects the nerve fibers in much the same way as insulation covering electrical wiring. Although the process can take up to 10 years to reach completion, the bulk of myelinization occurs during the fetal and infancy stages. Several researchers contend that, based on physiological research alone, brain development extends well into the twenties, causing some to consider the adolescent period to range from 11-25 years of age.

### *Age appropriate activities*

**Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."** The most appropriate homeschooling activities are things that gently introduce a child into the wonders of his immediate world and the imagination. These early years are the perfect time to provide an atmosphere where the child can freely dream and play and explore and grow in both body and imagination. Here is a wonderful summary of children ages 4-7: <http://blue.utb.edu/ecantu/Phys%20202314/Feldman3Notes/PreschoolPhysCogFeldman3Notes.htm>

### *Three Giants in Early Childhood Development: Piaget, Montessori, and Mason*

Jean Piaget, Switzerland, 1925: Observed that children move through stages as they learn to understand their world. Children ages 4-7 cannot conserve and are very egocentric.

Maria Montessori, Italy, 1900: Medical Dr. turned educator in Italy. Said children teach themselves through their endless ability to absorb information. Advocated uninterrupted work cycles, integrated subjects, kinesthetic materials. First one to think of small chairs and tables!

Charlotte Mason, England, 1891: Living books, nature study, warm and loving atmosphere, lifestyle.

### *What does a Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum look like?*

\*A good home! Training in household routine and chores, moral training, training in service and stewardship. Instead of making an agenda, make your home a learning place. Provide time to exercise the imagination and stimulate creativity. No need to spend much! Build a warm loving environment with outings, read aloud time, household tasks, counting, nature play, etc.

\*A balance of work (play), study and service - Raymond and Dorothy Moore, Home Grown Kids, many others

\*Think in terms of TRAINING as your curriculum - Ruth Beechick, A Biblical Home Education, many others

**"The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things."  
-Plato**

## ***Play is the work of children***

\*There is a strong and clear connection between play and cognitive development. So much so, that it is shocking that educators everywhere aren't advocating it. There is no evidence at all to support forcing early academics on small children. Any apparent advancement is not long-lived. There is much evidence demonstrating the harm done when children are pressured academically.

\*Process is more important than product

\*Connect new information to old information.

\*Discovery - "Discovery learning is more than just activities. It is activities plus kids thinking, and then testing what they think." - Jessica Hulcy, Author of KONOS

## ***Play is how we learn***

\*Living History

\*Pretending

\*Trying out ideas

\*Learning from Dads, cousins, siblings, re-enactors, hobbyists, etc.

*Play Places:* Museums, History Days, Acting Out

*Early Math:* Manipulatives, Symbols

*Early Science:* What do I already know? What do I want to know?

*Early Language:* Re-telling, Performing

*Early Art:* Expressing oneself, Copying and creating

## ***Conclusion***

\*Children who wait until second or third grade to start formal academics usually catch up with their peers and often pass them. There will be less stress, better behavior and motivation, fewer eye problems.

\*Strong correlation between play and cognitive development.

\*Be sure you are not letting academics become your primary focus.

\* "God put the wiggle into children. Don't you dare try to take it out."

Henrietta Mears.

## ***For Further Study:***

Elkind, David. Miseducation: Pre-Schoolers at Risk. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Moore, Raymond and Dorothy. Home-Grown Kids. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1981. See also *School Can Wait*, *The Successful Homeschool Family*, *Home Spun Schools*, and more.

Beechick, Ruth. A Biblical Home Education. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

Beechick, Ruth. Teaching Preschoolers. Denver, Colorado: Accent Books, 1979. See also *Teaching Kindergartners*.

***"The whole library is our textbook,  
and the whole world is our curriculum." -Jessica Hulcy***