

Ten Things Children Learn From Block Play

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Evidence, as well as research, indicates that children learn through “block play.” NAEYC’s (National Association for Education of Young Children) statement of Recommended Practices includes experiences playing in the block center which included the following:

- Full set of unit blocks
- Assorted props tied to children’s current interests and experiences
- Open storage shelves
- Plenty of space and time to build and rebuild their structures
- Adult interaction that helps to embed skills across domains

Below is a summary of skills that children are exposed to, develop, and practice in block centers:

1. **Problem solving.** Experimenting, trying options, looking for resources to determine how to build a certain structure or how to make a structure taller, more balanced.
2. **Imagination.** Children can follow their own plan, or they can share a friend’s vision and work together to create something. With adult encouragement and interest they can give structures unique names and think of unique uses.
3. **Self-expression.** Blocks offer many ways for young learners to explore, express themselves, and demonstrate what they are learning across languages and abilities. Teachers should encourage expression across modalities, asking children to describe verbally, draw a picture, take a photo, or use augmentative methods to express their ideas and accomplishments.
4. **Mathematics.** Important concepts and skills are practiced and strengthened through block play, including length, measurement, comparison, number, estimation, symmetry, balance.
5. **Continuity and permanence.** Block play engages spatial sense and motor abilities.
6. **Creativity.** Blocks and other loose parts can be moved freely by children, to be combined and recombined in countless ways.
7. **Science.** Blocks offer opportunities to test hypotheses and build scientific reasoning.
8. **Self-esteem.** Children discover that they have ideas and that they can bring their ideas to life by creating, transforming, demolishing, and re-creating something unique.
9. **Social and emotional growth.** Blocks help children learn to take turns and share materials, develop new friendships, become self-reliant, increase attention span, cooperate with others, and develop self-esteem.
10. **Development in all areas.** Block play requires fine and gross motor skills. Blocks enhance children’s problem-solving abilities, mathematics skills, and language and literacy abilities. Constructing “creations” builds self-esteem and feelings of success.