

WHY DO WE PLAY "GAMES" AT KINDY?

Why is make believe or pretend play such an important focus in our curriculum at Ballymore?

- This is such a natural way for children play. Do you remember building cubbies under the dining room table? Dressing up in mum's jewellery? Flying your cardboard box "aeroplane" around the backyard? As children we liked to "try on" different roles to see how it felt - children today are just the same!
- Children are not, as some may think, "empty vessels" waiting to be filled with appropriate knowledge by teachers. By the time children arrive at kindy they have already acquired a significant range of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Establishing make believe games provides children with reasons to access that knowledge, refine it and build on it.
- In this type of program, children are seen as active (not passive) learners whose ideas are valued and who are encouraged to be creative decision makers and problem solvers. This is so important for their sense of identity - for autonomy, independence and the confidence to face and deal with new situations and problems.
- By being able to act on their ideas, children are motivated to extend their development and learning. Motivation is derived from a sense of purpose. Children are more likely to be actively engaged and learning when the experience has personal relevance to them. For example: it's much more interesting to use pen and paper to draw a space map to use in your spaceship than because someone has told you to do a drawing!
- Language plays a major role in this program as children are encouraged to share ideas and communicate for a variety of purposes in their play. Language is vital to thinking and learning. Talking about ideas helps children to clarify their experiences and thoughts, and can help them to make connections between new and existing knowledge.
- By its very nature make believe play emphasises social relationships - focussing on children communicating and relating to one another in a variety of contexts. Children are encouraged to not only be independent in their efforts but also interdependent as the group identity is stressed - the need to be aware of others, and respectful of individual ideas and efforts.

- Make believe play supports research into brain development. Our play takes place in a climate of relaxed alertness. It involves content that engages the whole child in rich and complex problem solving, and allows opportunities for the child to bring to the surface, or represent, what is experienced or learned (Caine & Caine, 1994).
- Make believe play encourages the use of symbols - ie something representing something else. This symbolisation is the first step in developing literacy and numeracy, and the understanding that letters and numbers are symbols with meaning.
- Make believe play accommodates different learning styles and allows children to experience success as they play at their own level and stretch themselves to meet goals they have set. There is no "right" way to engage in make believe play. In addition, such play provides opportunities to interact in different ways. Quieter children can be seen to be a leader in play when their role requires it or when the game has relevance to them or has developed from their own idea.
- Make believe play is an effective strategy to assist children in meeting the 5 outcome areas of the Qld Kindergarten Learning Guidelines - Identity, Connectedness, Wellbeing, Active Learning and Communication and reflects the philosophy of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:

Belonging is the basis for a fulfilling life - relationships with family, community, culture and place are paramount,

Being is about living the here and now. Childhood is a special time in life and children need time to just 'be' - time to play, try new things, have fun, and

Becoming is about the learning and development that young children are capable of.

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