



# WHAT IS PLAY-BASED LEARNING?

PLAY-BASED LEARNING PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO DEVELOP A SENSE OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM THROUGH INQUIRY, EXPLORATION, INTERACTION AND PROBLEM SOLVING.

- Play develops children's content knowledge and provides children the opportunity to develop social skills, competencies and disposition to learn.<sup>1</sup> When children engage in real-life and imaginary activities, play can be challenging children's thinking.<sup>2</sup>
- Additionally, children learn best through first-hand experiences... the purpose of play-active learning is that it motivates, stimulates and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language acquisitions/ communication skills and concentration.<sup>3</sup>
- During play, children use all their senses, communicate their thoughts and emotions, explore their environment, and connect what they already know with new knowledge, skills and attitudes. They bring their language, customs and culture into the classroom as they reveal themselves to their classmates and teachers through play.
- Play contributes to language acquisition, early literacy, conceptual learning, problem solving, large and small motor skills and creativity. Children are most receptive to learning during play and exploration, and are generally willing to persist in order to learn something new or solve a problem.
- Teachers help enhance play-based learning by creating environments in which rich play experiences are available. Providing the right materials and creating a space that is focused around the needs of the children in the room, teachers become facilitators of child led learning. These rich play experiences create powerful connections and naturally build on all domains of a child's development.
- Teachers must take advantage of their natural curiosity and exuberance to guide their students toward topics and ideas that interest them.
- Play evokes innovation and creativity as children explore and experiment, clarify and construct knowledge leading to a deep understanding that connects with their prior

knowledge. They are motivated and empowered to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning as the desire to explore comes from a developing sense of identity. In the NWT JK/K Curriculum, identity is grounded in the Dene and Inuit cultures by bringing in values and experiences

that are unique to the north through materials and activities that are relevant to where the JK/K

program is being offered.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Wood, E. and J. Attfield. (2005). Play, learning and the early childhood curriculum. 2nd ed. London: Paul Chapman

<sup>2</sup>Whitebread, D., Coltman, P., Jameson, H. & Lander, R. (2009). Play, cognition and self-regulation: What exactly are children learning when they learn through play? *Educational & Child Psychology*, 26(2), 40-52

<sup>3</sup>Welsh Assembly Government. (2008). Play/active learning: Overview for 3- to 7-year olds. Retrieved October 21st, 2012, from: [http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation\\_phase/foundationphasepractitioners/playactive/?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation_phase/foundationphasepractitioners/playactive/?lang=en)

<sup>4</sup>Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories (2014). Integrated Kindergarten Curriculum: A Holistic Approach to Children's Early Learning, from [https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/kindergarten\\_curriculum\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/kindergarten_curriculum_2014.pdf)