

What do we mean when we say “play-based” learning?

When we say that Carter Nursery School is “play-based”, we mean that through play the children are learning valuable, lifelong lessons. Carter Nursery School has adopted the **Responsive Classroom** model of teaching. Through this training we are giving the children skills with which they will develop a sense of community, cooperation and independence through positive social interactions. They will also develop the skills for conflict resolution with minimal adult guidance. How can I make a friend and then be a good friend? How can I be a good citizen and contribute to my classroom and my world?

During our daily morning meetings the teachers and children work together to strengthen the feelings of community, respect and empathy for their friends. With the guidelines that are set forth in the beginning of the year, the expectations are modeled and supported. We wait our turn to speak; we learn to share, and to give one another the space and respect to express our feelings. In our 4's program, our morning meeting has a more directed meaning because the teachers are introducing the written words when they read the greeting each morning. The leaders will choose how to greet each other, with another language, or a touch or just a “hello”. This gives the leader a chance to actually be a leader and help the class develop a sense of community. Then the children are asked to “sign in” to practice writing their name.

In our 3 and 4 year old classes, through play, our children are learning math concepts every time they count, make comparisons, sort, build and match shapes. In science, the children observe the world around them both inside and outside the classroom. By providing the proper tools for discoveries the children can make observations, predictions and come to conclusions. Throughout the year, exposure to literature is paramount. Besides being read to every day, the children learn about the concepts of print, the author, illustrator and the beginning, middle and end of a book. By mid-year many of the children begin to express an interest in writing. In the 3's they are developmentally progressing towards phonological awareness and may begin to write their name. Our literacy exposure continues to develop in our 4's program through our morning meeting and other group activities such as calendar, story time and circle. When you are 3 and 4, music and movement seems like a lot of fun but we are also developing hand eye coordination, balance, self-expression as well as knowing where our body is in space.

If you have the opportunity to parent help it may seem like just “playing” but the children are actively filling their day with a lot of learning.