

BEGINNING WITH PLAY-BASED LEARNING

Replacing didactic instruction with play is not an easy transition for teachers trained in traditional approaches and who feel comfortable teaching in this way. Teachers, students, and parents will require time and support, but the pay-off is well worth the effort. Students will thrive at school instead of merely surviving; parents will be relieved of the stress of trying to get children to do homework and put forth their best effort at school; teachers will find a renewed joy and enthusiasm for their profession.

There are several ways for teachers to take the first step to familiarize themselves with play-based learning.

- Visit one or more classrooms to view a play-based program, and allot time for questions and discussion.
- Choose a book or article that focuses on play or inquiry as a focus for a group discussion, and ask participants to commit to try some of the ideas in their classrooms.
- Record the questions that staff have about play, and use these as a basis for discussion, research, reflection and action.
- Jump in with both feet. Change the schedule and classroom organization to accommodate play-based learning. It is important to document the experience from the start to evaluate the changes that occur.
- Engage the children in a discussion about play. Focus the discussion on what they believe play means, what they imagine can happen during play, what is needed for play-based inquiry in the classroom, and why it is important to their learning.
- Seek out colleagues, administrators, parents, or consultants who are interested in a play-based program to act as 'sounding' boards for new ideas.

