

Block Play: What the Children are Learning:

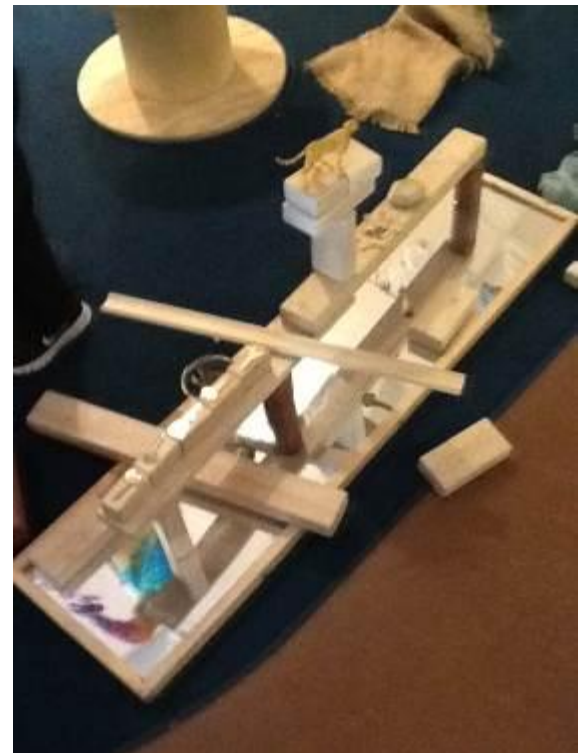
“Block play is a great way to build skills that we ordinarily think of as *academic* or school-related.

Blocks are especially beneficial when children are allowed to freely explore and manipulate the blocks in a variety of engaging ways.

Children’s creativity is further expanded through encouragement to make their own accessories from throw away junk items.

When it comes to blocks, it’s all in their imaginations!”

– Karen Stephens, Director of Illinois State University Child Care Center and ISU instructor



Foundational and Academic Skills Occurring During Block Play

Examples of academic skills that children explore, practice, experiment and refine during opportunities with free exploration block play:

Math:

- Patterns
- Size Relationships
- Geometry
- Equality and inequality
- Part-whole relationships
- Measurement
- Fractions
- Symmetry
- Adding, dividing, subtracting
- Classification
- Quantity
- Volume
- Length



Science:

- Balance
- Law of gravity
- Self in space
- Inductive thinking
- Discovery
- Properties of matter
- Interaction of the forces
- Stability



Social Skills:

- Negotiation
- Caring and consideration
- Cooperation
- Balance of individual and group rights
- Social problem solving
- See the world from another perspective
- Feeling of competence



Cognitive Skills:

- Symbolic thinking
- Socio-dramatic play
- Flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
- Creativity and motivation
- Make connections
- Problem solving
- Persists



Sketching first and then building...



Language:

- Social language
- Complex sentence structure
- Comprehension of language
- Tells about time and place
- Expanding Children's Vocabulary:

Common Core Standards require children to explain, describe, define, ask, compare and contrast, respond, etc.



In order to accomplish these skills, children need meaningful, engaging, hands-on opportunities to build an expressive vocabulary to both describe and tell the use of many familiar objects and to incorporate new, less familiar or technical words in everyday conversations.

Block Play offers excellent opportunities for introducing, reinforcing and expanding upon vocabulary. While the teacher is interacting with the students during block play expanded vocabulary can be introduced and reinforced through questioning, scaffolding, and "I wonder" or "I notice" statements.

Examples of Vocabulary to Introduce/Reinforce during Block Play:

Tension	Stable	Wobble
Massive	Equal	Steady
Measure	Several	Less
More	Area	Length
Represent	Stability	Fasten
Horizontal	Diagonal	Symmetry
Edge	Connect	Balance
Structure	Disassemble	Gravity
Vertical	Architecture	Surface
Construction	Asymmetrical	Perpendicular
Parallel	Attributes	Tremble
Cooperate	Negotiate	Incremental
Numerous	Level	Represent
Firm	Three-dimensional	Secure
Affix	Expanse	Zone
Region	Broad	Slanting
Slope	Transverse	Intersecting
Hard	Smooth	Heavy
More	Area	Length

