



Comfort Play & Teach

Activities to Promote Development





Comfort Play & Teach



Creative Arts

Art supports children's growth in so many ways, allowing children opportunities to explore materials (i.e. paint, paper, paste, clay, beautiful junk), to strengthen their motor skills, to express their thoughts and feelings, to appreciate and learn from the efforts of their peers, and to feel pride in their own creations. Educators can provide unlimited **Comfort, Play & Teach** time by encouraging children to look at and create art.



Comfort

- Art experiences should be open-ended and process oriented. This helps children to feel capable as they shape dough, smear paint, tear paper, arrange and glue collage materials or build three dimensional structures from boxes, berry baskets and paper towel rolls. Creative art activities can motivate children, build their confidence and foster pride in their achievements and in their unique work.
- Children can relax as they finger paint and experiment with lines, spirals, swirls, dots, or make hand prints and squish paint between their fingers. Combining flour, salt, vegetable oil and water into dough that can be patted, pinched, rolled and squeezed might help children to release tension as they create different shapes. Playing tranquil music adds inspiration to art experiences as well.

Play

- Enjoying and creating art is not restricted to the art table! Children discuss their drawings, practicing expressive language skills. They discover art techniques by viewing picture book illustrations. They can assemble puzzles made from art gallery post cards. Making play dough teaches math concepts, while collecting nature items for collages helps children notice beauty in their environment.
- Many concepts are learned indirectly as children explore and experiment with art materials. While painting they learn about *colours*, and what happens when colours combine. Constructing with beautiful junk teaches about *space*. Assembling collages builds children's understanding of *textures* and *patterns*. Lots can be learned about what is involved in creating art, simply by creating it!

Teach

- Using different art materials such as paint brushes, crayons, scissors, glue sticks, markers and modeling dough not only enables children to create works of art in various ways, but helps them to practice small motor skills and develop eye-hand co-ordination. Many of the skills that children use to represent their ideas through art will eventually be used to represent their ideas in writing.
- Creating art encourages the development of divergent thinking and problem-solving skills. As children use familiar items in unexpected ways, for example, pine cones and tree bark for print making, coffee grounds for play dough, labels from cans for collage or pipe cleaners and aluminum foil for sculpting, they expand their imaginations while discovering different possible uses for things.



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TOP TEN – Creative Art Activities

1 Read books together which have been illustrated using different art techniques. Barbara Reid's work in plasticine is textured and detailed. Joost Elffers has created charming characters from carved fruits and vegetables. Children can enjoy paintings by Eric Carle, or collage and prints by Leo Lionni. Both look at and talk about the artwork.



2 Point out shapes, colours, patterns and textures to your child as you walk in the neighbourhood or through parks together. Are there sculptures to stop and notice, bright posters, or chalk art on the sidewalk? Can he see flowers in gardens or find different stones and leaves? Help your child to see the beauty in everyday things.

3 Turn cooking into a creative art experience. Your child can participate in rolling and cutting out cookies in different shapes or icing and decorating cupcakes. She can learn about colours and shapes as she helps to assemble a salad using green lettuce, red tomatoes, orange carrots, white mushrooms, and purple onions.

4 Provide lots of paper and a variety of materials including pencils, crayons, markers, chalk, pastels and paints. Encourage your child to tell you about what he is drawing and write down his words. Long before your child can read and write, he can create pictures and artwork that can tell you wonderfully detailed stories.

5 Turn recyclable materials into beautiful junk that your child can use to create three dimensional structures like houses and vehicles. As she glues and tapes boxes, tubes, bottle lids, cone cups and other interesting things together she will learn about different shapes and discover new uses for old things as well.

6 Involve your child in creating his own presents, greeting cards and gift wrap. This is a lovely chance for him to explore different art techniques like paper maché, collage, painting and printing, sculpting with play dough and to discover the enjoyment that comes from making something for another person.

7 Make puppets with your child. Explore different kinds such as stick puppets made from a paper plate, tongue depressor and craft materials, hand puppets made from socks or paper bags, or finger puppets made from construction paper or felt. Puppet play will help her to develop language skills and to make up stories.

8 Explore art that is around the house. Beautiful designs and patterns can be found in quilts, curtains, rugs, cushion covers and place mats. Candles, jewelry and dishes come in different shapes and colours. Explain to your child how art is created and describe how things around the house can add beauty to where we live.

9 Collect nature items when walking in the park or neighbourhood. These can be used to create collages or seasonal displays that provide an opportunity for your child to learn through looking and touching, and to practice skills like decision-making and arranging materials.

10 Visit local art galleries, studios or museums so your child has an opportunity to look at and compare different kinds and styles of art, to find out how art is created, and perhaps even have the chance to talk to the artists themselves.



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TOP TEN – Creative Art Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

- I encourage my child to talk about his drawings and I write down what he has told me so he knows I am interested in what he is saying.
- My child enjoys calming sensory experiences like finger painting, smearing corn starch goop and squeezing play dough.
- I display my child's artwork so she has a chance to admire her own work and feel pride in what she has created.
- My child and I take time together to draw, shape play dough, paint and create collages. It is a wonderful time to relax and talk together.



Play:

- I supply my child with a variety of craft materials to create with, so he can make discoveries about shapes, colours and textures as he invents things.
- My child and I make puppets together and use them to make up stories or to role play the ones we love reading together.
- I provide different art materials like crayons, pencils, water paint, markers, chalk and pastels so she can explore their different qualities.
- My child and I explore the illustrations in picture books. We try to draw using the same materials and illustrate the stories he makes up.



Teach:

- My child and I cook together, using different tools and ingredients to decorate cookies, cupcakes. He creates different patterns and designs.
- I take my child to art galleries and museums so she can see different styles of art and learn about how works of art are displayed and cared for.
- My child and I make some of our own craft materials like play dough and paper maché so he can experiment with different ingredients.
- I encourage my child to collect rocks, pine cones, leaves and feathers. She learns about nature as she uses these items to create collages.

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!



Comfort Play & Teach



Dramatic Play

Through dramatic play children show their understanding of the world. As they encounter family members, friends, teachers and community helpers, children learn to interact positively, and express feelings appropriately. Dramatic play provides Comfort, Play & Teach™ opportunities for children to explore their feelings and relationships, experiment with different roles, and to practice skills like dressing and tidying.



Comfort

- The dramatic play area allows children to practice social skills like sharing, turn-taking, conversing and collaborating. As they play together, children decide who will be the grown-up or the baby, and practice using phrases they have learned. They can be different people, and express various emotions while they make sense of their daily experiences through play.
- Conflict can arise during group play, for example when a child does not want to play an assigned role, or when someone takes away a toy that someone else is using. Children can be guided to use words to describe their feelings, or to ask for things they want. Dramatic play can help build skills required for respecting and getting along with other people.

Play

- Role playing is not just for the dramatic play centre. Small figures like people, animals and vehicles can be used in the sand and water tables. Puppets make an excellent addition to the language area. Children will learn a lot by playing with plastic snakes and insects at the science centre. Simple dolls can be made at the art table from clothes pegs and fabric or from corn husks.
- Children learn by observing and modeling after different people in their family and community and through manipulating things. Providing household items and clothes permits children to imitate their parents and siblings, while providing doctors' kits or grocery store materials lets children safely play out experiences they have had in different environments, like medical offices and shops.

Teach

- Include materials in the dramatic play centre that promote math and literacy skills. For example, a toy cash register or sets of plastic dishes can support children's understanding of counting. Labels on food containers and board books to "read" to the dolls can encourage children's interest in and use of print. Children can practice many important school readiness skills through drama.
- Through dramatic play, children can strengthen their fine motor skills and practice activities and tasks that they help with at home. Clothes with zippers, buttons, snaps and velcro support children's ability to get dressed, while toy dishes and food enable children to pretend to cook, practice setting the table, serve meals and feed themselves. Play helps to teach children life skills.



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TOP TEN – Dramatic Play Activities

- 1 Read books together that your child would be able to role play** using puppets, felt board pieces, simple props and costumes or just by doing actions. Books like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr. or *The Enormous Potato* by Aubrey Davis invite participation and are stories that can be told repeatedly.
- 2 As your child meets more and more community helpers** such as doctors, police officers, fire fighters, grocers and teachers, provide simple props that encourage him to role play what they do. Dramatic play provides an opportunity for your child to explore and make sense of his experiences and his feelings about them.
- 3 Provide open-ended art materials that encourage imaginative play.** Materials like play dough can be shaped in many different ways – into food, planets, animals, people, and story book characters. Your child can pretend she is many things such as chef, veterinarian, and astronaut as she creates with play dough.
- 4 Add a variety of props to bath tub play** to turn washing into an opportunity for role playing and imagination. Excellent additions to bath time include plastic people and animals, boats, and bath puppets. These can be used to make up stories and to go on fabulous adventures!
- 5 Make a variety of puppets from different household things** like paper plates and popsicle sticks, wooden clothes pegs, old socks, egg cartons, boxes, paper bags, crayons and collage materials, and folded origami paper. Puppets encourage language use and help your child to build his imagination through storytelling.
- 6 Create a special storage box for dramatic play materials** that your child can help decorate. Include things like hats, gloves, aprons, jewelry, cooking tools like a plastic bowl and wooden spoons, dolls, stuffed animals. Your child can role model things she sees you doing and practice many important self-help skills as well.
- 7 Turn a large box into a car, space ship, boat, airplane or train** by painting and adding collage materials to it. Your child can use home made vehicles to engage in pretend play and to go on imaginary trips, and he can make his play with the vehicle relate to familiar story books and songs.
- 8 Play simple games of charades, demonstrating familiar activities** such as reading a book, sleeping and picking a flower or different emotions like happy, sad and excited. Encourage your child to guess what you are role playing, but invite her to role play too, so she can learn to use her actions and facial expressions imaginatively.
- 9 Enrich your child’s dramatic play experiences with literacy and math props.** Board books to read to the dolls and small, illustrated cook books can encourage pre-reading skills. Calculators and pretend money can introduce your child to numbers and counting while encouraging pretend play related to shopping.
- 10 Go to puppet shows, storytelling events and children’s plays** at your local public library. This can provide your child with all kinds of ideas and inspiration for his own imaginative play at home.





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TOP TEN – Dramatic Play Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

- I encourage my child to share the rhymes and finger plays he is learning so he can take pride in demonstrating his growing role playing skills.
- My child sings songs like *Old MacDonald* and *If You're Happy and You Know It* because she enjoys dramatizing different animals and feelings.
- I take time to relax and play with my child and to participate in a picnic or tea party with his teddy bears. I enjoy taking part in pretending!
- My child and I laugh together as we read different picture books and role play the different characters before she goes to sleep.



Play:

- I supply my child with different bath toys like plastic people and animals, bath puppets and boats so that washing can be a time for imaginative play
- My child and I make puppets together and use them to make up stories or to role play the ones we love reading together.
- I provide different dress up items and props from around the house that my child can use for pretend play.
- My child and I add sound effects and actions to story books and nursery rhymes to bring the reading experience to life!



Teach:

- My child's dramatic play clothes include items with buttons, snaps, zippers and laces so that he can practice different dressing skills
- I take my child to the library to enjoy puppet shows, storytelling events and plays to encourage his imaginative skills.
- My child and I read different picture books and role play the stories together to encourage his pre-reading skills.
- I encourage my child to role play different nursery rhyme characters like *Humpty Dumpty*, to help him develop creative problem-solving skills.

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!



Comfort Play & Teach



Music and Movement

Making music and movement part of the daily curriculum supports children's development in joyful ways that bring beauty into their lives. It is a lovely way to turn learning activities into **Comfort, Play & Teach** time. Whether children dance with scarves, sing "Old MacDonald", listen to favourite recordings, or keep the beat to nursery rhymes using shakers or rhythm sticks, they are showing a natural urge to be musical!



Comfort

- Music can communicate many different emotions, like joy, sadness, excitement and love. Using it effectively in the classroom enables children to explore a range of feelings and to express their own. Play background music while children paint, or sing a lullaby at rest time. Repeat songs, finger plays and rhymes that make children laugh and smile, to build each child's esteem.
- There are many ways in which music helps children to feel successful and confident. They can remember the words to songs and rhymes or invent their own movements to music. They can easily play instruments like maracas and jingle hammers, instantly producing satisfying sounds. Children's creative expression lets them show their own uniqueness and how special they are.

Play

- Each area of the curriculum can allow children to explore music. Provide instruments as a science activity, so children can compare sounds, or include some in the drama centre for imaginative exploration. Play singing games out on the playground. Create sound makers at the art table. Read books that invite chanting and moving at circle time. Music can enrich each learning area!
- Nursery rhymes have a wonderful rhythm patterns that encourage children to play with and hear the musical qualities of language. There are many characters that children can role-play, like *Humpty Dumpty*, *Lucy Locket*. Adding actions, movement, and drama to language experiences reinforces children's learning in different ways and opens up their imaginations.

Teach

- Having musical instruments available in the classroom can allow children to ask a variety of questions. They can learn what instruments are made of, and how they make different sounds. They can discover where instruments come from and how music of different cultures sounds. They can compare the differences between drums, rasps, finger cymbals, thumb pianos, maracas and rain sticks.
- Children can be introduced to musical concepts through the simplest songs and rhymes. They can pat the *beat* on their laps as they listen to music and feel the *rhythm* of words in nursery rhymes. They can sing *loudly*, or whisper *softly*, tip-toe *quickly* or crawl *slowly*. By exploring a variety of instruments made from metal, wood, skin, or plastic, they can compare each sound quality or *timbre*. Children will delight in learning *melody* as they sing their favourite songs.



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TOP TEN – Music & Movement Activities

- 1 Read books based on nursery rhymes that you and your child can recite, sing and chant together.** *Old Mother Hubbard* by Jane Cabrera and *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, illustrated by Salley Mavor are books with very beautiful art work. The rhythmic language of the text will encourage your child to join in the reading.
- 2 Listen to different styles of music at home,** including classical, rock, choral, baroque, country, jazz, opera, folk, and music from different countries and cultures. This will give your child an opportunity to discover the wide variety of sounds and languages of music and to develop her own tastes and listening preferences as well.
- 3 Make musical instruments from recyclable materials** that are readily available around the house. Aluminum pie plates can be used for cymbals. An ice cream container and two wooden spoons make a fine drum. A plastic bottle with either water or rice in it is a simple shaker. Two paper towel rolls can be tapped together too!
- 4 Do finger plays like *This Little Piggy* or clapping games like *Peas Porridge Hot*** with your child. In addition to being an enjoyable way to play with and interact with your child, they encourage your child to use his imagination, to role play the rhyme with actions, and to hear and respond to the rhythm of language.
- 5 When your child listens to music, provide colourful scarves for her to move and dance about with.** She can use them to make circles, rainbows, waves and zigzags, and crumple a scarf into a ball, toss it into the air and watch it float down. Scarves can be worn like veils or aprons and make dancing into a dramatic play experience!
- 6 Attend concerts if possible.** Often libraries, universities and churches provide opportunities to listen to live music for free. Your child will have the chance to see a musician perform and to begin to understand what is involved in presenting a concert and in being a member of the audience
- 7 Visit a music store and explore the different kinds of instruments there** including flutes, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, violins, pianos, keyboards, xylophones and saxophones. Your child can learn the names of the instruments and be introduced to the different sounds that they make.
- 8 When reciting nursery rhymes together, play with the way you say them.** For example, if you use the rhyme *One, Two Buckle My Shoe*, say one line fast and one line slow. Try one line high and one line low. Do one line loudly and the next softly. This is a great way to introduce simple music concepts like tempo, pitch and volume.
- 9 Go for listening walks and pay attention to the sounds around you.** Can you hear the wind in the trees or leaves crunching beneath your feet? Are there birds singing, crickets chirping or dogs barking? Make a game of identifying the different sounds
- 10 Think of ways to sing songs throughout the day.** *Old MacDonald* and *Bingo* are fun songs to sing while in the car and encourage your child to join in. Familiar songs like *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* can be sung while drawing pictures or cooking together. Lullabies can be part of a comforting bed time routine.





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TOP TEN – Music & Movement Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

- I sing lullabies to my child as a regular part of his sleep time routine, in addition to reading story books.
- My child enjoys finger painting, shaping play dough and drawing pictures as music is gently playing in the background.
- I do finger plays and recite nursery rhymes with my child. It is an enjoyable way for us to spend time together
- My child recognizes a number of songs and rhymes and likes to have her favourites repeated again and again.



Play:

- I supply my child with a variety of materials to explore and make sounds with so that he feels encouraged to sing and make music.
- My child and I make instruments together from beautiful junk and use them to add sound effects to some stories we read.
- I encourage my child to role play different nursery rhyme characters so she can use her imagination as she learns to recite the words on her own.
- My child sings and recites nursery rhymes to his dolls and teddy bears, copying the way we play together.



Teach:

- My child and I look at picture books about musical instruments and sounds to discover what different instruments look like, what they are made of.
- I recite familiar rhymes to my child sometimes leaving out words so she can fill in the blanks.
- My child and I listen to different styles of music and talk about what he is hearing and which instruments are playing.
- I play games with my child like *Head and Shoulders* and *Hokey Pokey* so she can learn her body parts and how they move.

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Mathematics

Children learn concepts like measurement, shape, location, counting, comparing, ordering, adding and taking away in many ways. When you hear them count aloud to ten, use words like 'first', 'last', 'over', 'under', 'bigger' or 'smaller', or see them build with blocks or use shapes in drawings, they are showing their understanding of mathematics. Here are some ideas for turning learning about mathematics into **Comfort, Play & Teach** time.



Comfort

- Children feel a sense of satisfaction and competence as their math and number skills increase, and as they learn to problem-solve. Help them practice these skills in familiar and comfortable ways, such as cooking, filling measuring cups at the water table, or stacking and counting blocks. The learning environment can provide many opportunities for exploring math.
- Think of ways to personalize math experiences. By creating a birthday board, children can track how old they are, see the number symbols for their birth date, and count how many friends celebrate a birthday each month. Providing a wall measure enables children to observe their own growth over time. They will love seeing how many inches they have grown since their last birthday!

Play

- Children need to touch and manipulate concrete objects in order to learn to think in abstract ways. Things that they experience each day can be used to practice math skills – toys, food, nature items. Objects can be grouped according to similarities (i.e. colour, shape, kind). They can be sequenced in order from smallest to largest. Children can practice skills like counting and matching.
- Include math experiences throughout the curriculum. Do finger plays to reinforce counting through rhyme, or read picture books that introduce number concepts. Teach measurement by making play dough. Encourage exploration of geometry and 3D shapes in the block area. Patterns emerge while creating a collage. Make calculators, toy cash registers and pretend money regular props in the drama centre. The possibilities for learning math through play are endless!

Teach

- Children need to explore math in many ways to understand it. Provide them with objects to manipulate, and open-ended activities with more than one right answer. Interact with the children, and ask questions that encourage their problem-solving and reasoning. Encourage them to interact with each other, so that they share and build their understanding together.
- Math experiences enable children to develop skills like identifying, classifying, observing, counting, calculating, measuring, predicting, problem-solving, ordering and matching. Adults can support children's understanding of the processes involved in developing these skills, so they are more able to communicate and to apply these understandings once they enter school.



Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Math Activities

- 1 Read counting books together** like *Roar! A Noisy Counting Book* by Pamela Duncan Edwards. This interactive book invites children to make sounds while counting animals. Another example is *Counting Kisses: A Kiss and Read Book*, which encourages affectionate interactions between parents and children as they read and count together.
- 2 Encourage your child to count with you.** As you walk up or down the stairs, count the number of steps. When you shop for groceries, ask your child to count apples as you place them into a bag. While tidying, count each toy as it is returned to its spot. Help your child to practice using numbers!
- 3 Do finger plays with your child like ‘Five Little Monkeys’.** This is a fun way to introduce number concepts, and also to help your child to begin to understand the processes involved in subtraction. With each repetition of the rhyme, there is one less monkey. Encourage your child to tell you how many are left.
- 4 Play games with your child like number and shape Bingo, Dominoes, matching games, and simple board games like Snakes and Ladders.** This will give you an opportunity to interact with your child, to observe her counting skills and to support her efforts to recognize and make sense of numbers.
- 5 Teach familiar songs and nursery rhymes which include numbers to your child.** *One, Two Buckle My Shoe, The Ants Go Marching One by One* and *This Old Man* are fun songs that will help him learn to count to ten. He will want to sing these familiar songs again and again.
- 6 Cook with your child.** As she participates in a family activity she will practice skills like counting and measuring ingredients, comparing quantities. Depending on what you cook, she can also learn important information about temperature. Try different cooking experiences, like freezing ice cream or baking muffins.
- 7 Suggest making a counting book using pictures of things that interest him.** Look at magazines, brochures and catalogues with your child. He can cut and paste different numbers of things like animals, cars, toys, foods from one to five, or sort the pictures into related groups.
- 8 Demonstrate different uses of numbers for your child.** Do simple household arithmetic using a calculator. Measure a window space for new curtains. Weigh ingredients on a kitchen scale. Cross off the days on a calendar. Use a timer when cooking. He will see the different ways people use numbers.
- 9 Provide craft materials for your child** like empty boxes, paper towel rolls and paper cone cups, so she can construct three-dimensional objects using recyclable materials from around the house. She can learn about different shapes and make discoveries about their dimensions.
- 10 Point out the names of familiar shapes** to your child when you walk in the neighbourhood. Help him to notice round car tires, rectangular doors, triangular traffic signs and square windows. This will encourage him to recognize different shapes and make words for them part of his vocabulary.





Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Math Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

My child and I know some finger plays like Five Little Monkeys and we recite them together often.

I read bed time stories to my child that include number concepts. He is familiar with *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Three Little Kittens*.

I praise my child's efforts to count things and show her how proud I am that she knows some numbers.

When my child and I share a snack together, we count the number of apple slices or crackers so we have the same amount.



Play:

I provide my child with empty containers of different shapes and sizes, paper towel rolls and other recyclables that she can use as craft materials

My child has a number of toys that he can count, sort, and put in order from smallest to largest.

At bath time, my child plays with different sized containers and he makes interesting discoveries as he fills and empties them.

My child has many different dramatic play props that include a toy telephone, a toy cash register and play money, and measuring cups and spoons for pretending to cook.



Teach:

My child and I look at cookbooks, and follow recipes. He is learning many concepts related to counting, measuring and temperature

I take my child to the grocery store and explain things to her like the cost of foods, how to weigh things in the scale, and how people use money.

My child and I play math games together like *Numbers Bingo*, *Snakes and Ladders* and *Dominoes*

When my child and I set the table, we count the dishes and different pieces of cutlery, making sure each person has one plate, cup, fork and knife.

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!



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Science and Nature

Children constantly notice, explore and ask questions about weather, plants, animals, stones, outer space, anatomy, sounds or magnetism. They observe, compare, predict, problem-solve and experiment when they plant seeds, collect rocks and leaves, cook, look at clouds, or care for a pet. Turning daily science experiences into **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time nurtures children's curiosity and deepens their wonder about the world.



Comfort

- Children are naturally inquisitive about their environment. Experiences with science and nature promote their curiosity and provide opportunities to ask questions. Adults' answers to these questions about the things children encounter, like bees, thunder and lightning, autumn leaves, or stars, help them to understand the world, but also to feel a sense of predictability and safety in the world.
- Having a pet in the classroom enables children to tend to the needs of something living and to provide them with the food, water or bedding they require to grow and be healthy. Children develop empathy as they respond to the needs of a living creature that depends on them and as their relationship with their special classroom friend grows.

Play

- Scientific discoveries can be made in different areas of the classroom! At the art table children can learn about colour mixing as they paint or change of state as they combine ingredients for play dough. Leaves and stones add texture to sand, while ice, boats and sponges enrich learning at the water table. Music experiences teach sound and movement. Budding doctors and vets explore in the dramatic play centre.
- Children learn through active engagement with concrete materials, and by using their senses. Provide a variety of hands-on activities - spices to smell, items to view with magnifying glasses (i.e. pine cones, bird nests, feathers, acorns), different flavours to taste, rocks or shells to sort, different sound shakers to compare. The possibilities for extending their knowledge through exploration are endless.

Teach

- Gardening with children provides a rich opportunity to learn about the life cycle of plants, and seasonal activities related to gardening like choosing and planting seeds, weeding and watering, harvesting and composting. There is much to be learned about the sequence of growth, colours, garden inhabitants, and different kinds of plants like vegetables, flowers and herbs.
- Each day presents a world of ways for children to make discoveries about science and nature - clouds, the wind, flowers, rocks, insects, birds and people. Asking open-ended questions, like, "What might happen if we bake the dough too long?" or "Why do you think plants need light?" allows children to practice their reasoning skills and reflect on their experiences.



Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Science Activities

1 Read books about science and nature together like *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, or *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert. Books like these help children to learn about living things, and about additional concepts like foods and colours. They provide an opportunity for children to ask meaningful questions about their world.

2 Play “I Spy” games with children and help them to notice nature as you walk in the neighbourhood together,. Encourage them to see shapes in the clouds, to crouch down and look at ants, to describe the texture of tree bark and to discover magic in the pattern in a spider’s web.

3 Cook with children. Bake bread, brew tea, freeze popsicles, and shake cream into butter; all are ways to help children to learn about the different foods people eat and how they are prepared, as well as concepts like change of state, hot and cold, and liquid and solid. When children cook, they observe, compare and problem-solve.

4 Plant a garden or provide indoor planting experiences like creating a terrarium or sprouting seeds. Gardening invites children into the world of fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and even weeds! Gardening lets children learn with their senses – touching soil, smelling flowers, seeing colours, or tasting scarlet runner beans.

5 Explore outdoors. Backyards and parks give children opportunities to explore living creatures like ladybugs, worms, butterflies, beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars and spiders. Use a simple collection container (like a plastic pop bottle cut in half) to catch and look closely at insects. Explore with a magnifying glass if you have one!

6 Consider adopting a pet. There are many different creatures to choose from like a fish, a snail, a cricket, a mouse, a guinea pig, a bird, a salamander, or larger animals like rabbits, cats and dogs. Children can learn many things about the habits of living things as they participate in cleaning, feeding and caring for their pet.

7 Read children’s science and nature magazines together (i.e. *Owl*, *Ranger Rick*, *Your Big Backyard*, and *Ladybug*). These can be signed out at the library or you can consider getting a subscription. Either way, children will learn important ways to conduct their own science research as their interest in science and nature grows!

8 Build simple machines. Provide materials like boxes, tubes, plastic bottles, fabric, string, aluminum pie tins, glue and tape for children to create with. Assembling them enables children to discover what they are made of, their shape, their colour and texture, as they invent unique machines.

9 Involve children in activities related to the weather and to seasonal change. Let them help to shovel snow in winter, to rake autumn leaves, to plant a spring garden and to buy summer sunscreen. They will learn about how people’s activities and behaviours are affected by the changing seasons.

10 Teach children about the science of their bodies. Help them learn the names of body parts and what they do, and how to care for their bodies, help them grow, and keep them safe through healthy habits like personal hygiene, nutrition, exercise and rest.





Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Science Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

- I encourage my child to care for nature by being gentle with insects and plants she explores.
- My child and I often discuss his discoveries about insects, rainbows, birds, rocks, thunder and flowers.
- I involve my child in caring for our family pet and/or house plants to help her understand the needs of living things.
- My child and I take quiet time together to admire gardens, look at the stars, lay on the grass and watch the clouds.



Play:

- I supply my child with materials to explore and create with, so she can invent things and make her own scientific discoveries
- My child has opportunities to play with sand and water, and to explore their properties using different containers and scoops.
- I provide the tools my child needs to explore and learn, like magnets, magnifying glasses, pinwheels, kaleidoscopes, and books.
- My child and I explore nature together by doing leaf and bark rubbings, and making leaf crowns and dandelion chains.



Teach:

- My child and I cook together, and talk about the ingredients and how they change through baking, freezing or boiling.
- I take my child to the library so she can choose books or magazines about insects, animals and plants and explore her own interests.
- My child learns about the seasons through activities like shoveling snow, planting the garden, swimming at the beach, and raking the leaves.
- I encourage my child to collect rocks, pine cones, leaves and feathers. He enjoys sorting and labeling the things he finds.

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!



Comfort Play & Teach



Physical Activity

Children learn so many new skills as they grow and become more ready for greater physical challenges. **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time includes all the opportunities children receive to test their agility, to do more complicated things with their fingers like do up buttons or assemble puzzles, and to learn about their body and how to keep it healthy by exercising, eating properly, bathing, brushing teeth and resting.



Comfort

- Show support and provide any needed help as children attempt different physical activities like riding a tricycle, walking on a low balance beam, batting a ball or climbing a ladder at the playground. Encourage their efforts, providing praise and letting them know they can always try again if they do not do the activity perfectly the first time. Your presence will help to build their confidence.
- Ensure that children enjoy a balance between active play and quiet time to rest and relax. Running, playing ball games, and dancing with scarves can help children to express excitement and release energy, while enjoying a quiet puzzle, laying on a blanket and gazing at clouds, and listening to soft music can give them needed time to daydream and to recharge their batteries.

Play

- Provide creative movement experiences that encourage children to use their imaginations and move like different animals, vehicles or other familiar things. Games like Simon Says can invite children to fly like an airplane, slither like a snake or bounce like a big rubber ball! What ideas can the children suggest? Join in their play to role-model ways of moving and to follow their lead, too!
- Activities like drawing, painting, finger puppets, assembling puzzles, building with blocks and lacing give children the chance to strengthen the small muscles in their hands as they play. They will also develop thinking and problem-solving skills and express their ideas as they do different things with their fingers and hands.

Teach

- Enjoy cooking activities and talk about different foods and the importance of eating nutritious meals and snacks. Making fruit salad, freezing yogurt popsicles, baking bran muffins and cooking scrambled eggs will allow children to sample items from the different food groups and learn about where they come from and how they are prepared as well.
- Give children opportunities to explore different kinds of movement activities such as dancing, playing cooperative games, kicking and throwing a ball, or doing yoga. Provide books for them to look at also, so they can ask questions and learn about the different activities they are enjoying and find out about what people do to develop their skills and stay physically healthy.



Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Physical Activities

1 Read books together about exercising and using our bodies for creative movement. Books like *Children on the Move: An Active Living Alphabet* by June Elizabeth Le Drew help children learn different ways to stay fit. *Can You Move Like an Elephant?* by Judy Hindley, invites children to move imaginatively as they play.

2 Walk in the neighbourhood with your child and take time to look at the things around you or make a game of listening to and identifying different sounds. Go to the park and explore the climbing equipment. These are great ways to get some fresh air, to burn off a little bit of energy and to just enjoy each other's company.

3 Play different kinds of music to encourage your child to move and dance around. Explore classical, pop, folk, or world music. Children can walk, jump, gallop, swirl, march and tip-toe. Provide scarves that can be used for making rainbows, zigzags, circles, waves – the scarves and music will inspire creativity!

4 Children can strengthen the small muscles in their hands in a variety of ways. Assembling puzzles, building with blocks and connecting straws, lacing, stringing necklaces, doing up buttons and zippers, drawing and painting – all of these will help child to develop his eye-hand co-ordination.

5 Cooking together is an excellent way for your child to learn about nutrition and to explore the different food groups. Bake bran muffins, blend yogurt shakes, make tuna or egg salad sandwiches or create a colourful fruit salad. Your child can learn some valuable skills as she learns about healthy foods to eat!

6 Encourage your child to develop self-help habits including tooth brushing and bathing. This helps him to understand what his body needs in order to stay healthy and teaches him necessary skills for taking proper care of himself.

7 Talk to your child about health care professionals such as doctors, nurses and dentists. This will enable her to understand what she experiences when she goes for a check up and to feel comfortable with the people whose special job it is to help children and grown-ups to stay healthy.

8 Consider community programs where your child can make new friends while exploring different physical activities like music and movement, swimming, gymnastics, sports, yoga or dance. Participating in organized activities helps children to learn valuable social skills while they are learning about their physical capabilities.

9 Invite some of your child's friends over to learn and play co-operative games, such as *London Bridge* and *Farmer in the Dell*. This will help your child to practice social skills like taking turns, and will encourage her to enjoy games where she is not playing to win.

10 Talk to your child about safety. Explain the rules that will help him to know how to keep safe at school, on the playground, in or near cars. Help him to recognize warning symbols on household containers so he knows which are unsafe.





Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN - Physical Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

- I encourage my child to explore his physical capabilities and offer my help and support when he shows he is ready for greater challenges
- My child and I take walks together. It provides a relaxing time for us to talk and enjoy each other's company.
- I answer my child's questions about doctors, nurses and dentists so that she feels safe and comfortable when she has a medical appointment
- My child and I spend time together drawing, building with blocks, lacing he strengthens the small muscles in his hands.



Play:

- I play games with my child like frozen tag, catch and Simon Says so that she can develop her physical skills as she plays.
- My child and I read books together that encourage creative movement and imaginative play.
- I encourage my child to move and dance to different styles of music. He is always inventing new dance steps!
- My child pretends to be a doctor and role plays what she understands about taking care of people when they are hurt or sick.



Teach:

- My child and I cook together, and talk about the different kinds of foods people eat in order to stay healthy and enjoy a balanced diet.
- I talk to my child about taking care of his body. He understands that he needs to eat well, wash his hands, brush his teeth, and get rest.
- My child is curious about physical activities like dance, gymnastics, sports. We get books from the library to encourage her to explore her interests.
- I explain safety rules to my child so he will know how to play safely, at home, at school or at the playground.

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!

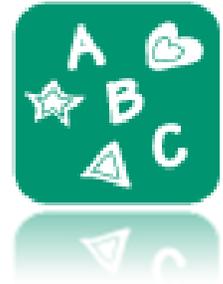


Comfort Play & Teach



Language and Literacy

Perhaps the most precious gifts that adults can share with children are language and literacy. When we teach children to communicate effectively and to read and write, they are enabled to share and obtain information and learn practically anything they want to learn. Here are some ways for adults to make the time they spend giving this gift **Comfort, Play & Teach** time.



Comfort

- Language helps children to understand others, to communicate their thoughts and feelings, and to belong. Through language, a child plays, problem-solves and interacts with other people. Adults can support these skills by talking to children, asking questions and showing interest in what they have to say. Children then learn to talk, ask questions and listen too!
- Interactions between caring adults and children are essential to language and literacy development. Throughout the day, there are many ways to help a child develop a love of language, such as reading a story, making lists or labels together, or following a recipe and cooking. A child's skills develop naturally through participating in daily activities and routines.

Play

- Many activities and experiences teach, encourage and reinforce language and literacy skills. These can include picture books, poems, nursery rhymes, finger plays, puppets and songs. Play materials can include crayons, pencils, markers, paper to write with, and dramatic play props like menus, telephone directories, magazines and board books that can be read to dolls.
- How does your learning environment support children's language and literacy skills? Set up the activity areas so that small groups can play and talk together. Make the classroom print rich so children can practice reading books, their names, labels, a story they dictated, or a poem they are learning. Show how language learning occurs in each learning area – art, science, music etc.

Teach

- Children's literacy is supported by adult role modeling. Adults should read to and read *in front of* children – books, newspapers, maps, directories, signs, mail, and labels. This not only demonstrates an enjoyment of reading, but shows that it is a useful skill. Children learn that print means something, and that reading helps them to investigate and understand the world around them.
- Exploring written words and listening to their sounds help children to build up their language and literacy skills. Nursery rhymes let children hear the music and rhythm of language, and detect differences in letter sounds. Storytelling introduces children to story patterns and structure (i.e. plot, climax, resolution) while books teach concepts like letter and word recognition, and matching the text and picture. Books also provide opportunities to engage children in discussions about why certain events happened and what those meant to the main character, as well any emotions or morals explored in the text.



Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Language Activities

1 Read books together like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you See?* or *From Head to Toe*, both by Eric Carle. Both of these books have many different creatures in them, like fish, gorillas, horses, giraffes and dogs, and your child will love using her body to copy the actions of the animals.

2 Encourage your child to read to you. Let him practice turning the pages independently or play an 'I Spy' game and ask him to identify familiar things in the pictures by pointing to them. This will help him to use the small muscles involved in reading books.

3 Do finger plays with your child like 'Five Little Monkeys', and take turns saying each line of the rhyme. She will love hearing the rhythm and music of language as she recites it, and dramatizing the actions with her fingers. She will also be practicing important conversational skills.

4 Read your child's favourite picture books to him before bed. This is a very comforting experience and will help your child develop a love of stories because he will associate being read to with being loved. Let story time be an opportunity to cuddle with your child and connect with him.

5 Provide board books for your child to read to her teddy bears and dolls. She will model reading behaviours she has observed, and practice emerging literacy skills like turning pages, telling stories about what is in the pictures and recognizing letters and words.

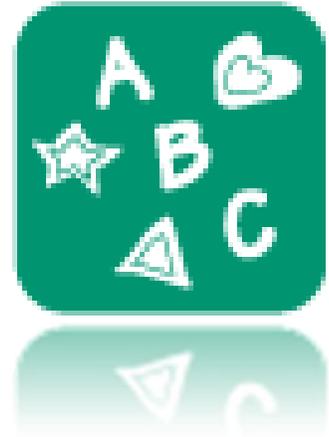
6 Provide crayons, pencils, markers and chalk for your child. As he draws he will strengthen the muscles involved in writing. Encourage him to tell you a story about his pictures. Write it down for him, so that he will see the connection between spoken and printed words.

7 Look at magazines and catalogues with your child. Ask her to cut out pictures of words that begin with different letters of the alphabet and glue these onto paper to create her own alphabet book. This will give her the opportunity to recognize the sound that each letter in the alphabet makes and to build her vocabulary.

8 Role model reading and writing for your child. Read the mail or make shopping lists together. Look at catalogues or write 'thank you' notes together. Follow a recipe or send an e-mail together. Your child will learn a lot about print and discover many ways to use it himself.

9 Provide craft materials for your child so she can make paper bag puppets. She can use these to develop her expressive language skills by making up her own stories or by role playing stories she already loves and knows well.

10 Point out the names of familiar products to your child when you go grocery shopping. As he becomes more able to identify those words independently he will develop confidence as he starts to see himself as able to read.





Comfort Play & Teach



TOP TEN – Language Activities

CHECKLIST: Activities We Do At Home



Comfort:

My child and I read bed time stories together each night

I make time to ask my child questions about her day

My child and I repeat his favourite finger plays and rhyme frequently, enjoying the familiar words

I praise my child's emerging literacy skills and encourage her tell me stories about pictures that she draws.



Play:

I supply my child with empty product containers, flyers and coupons for pretend play so text is a natural part of his play

My child represents her experiences with books by drawing, dancing, using craft materials, singing songs

I tell my child simple stories that she can dramatize using puppets. She knows a few by heart!

My child has many different kinds of books and pretends to read to his stuffed toys



Teach:

My child and I look at cookbooks, write lists of needed ingredients and follow recipes. He is learning many new words!

I take my child to the library so she can see what is available there (i.e. books, magazines, videos) and sign things out

My child and I play word games together like *Alphabet Bingo*, *I Spy* or matching rhyming word cards

I write down stories that my child tells me so that she can see what her spoken words look like in print

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE TOY!