

***The Importance of Play:  
From the Voices of 5-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Gifted Students***

**Sally Beisser, Ph.D.  
Catherine Gillespie, Ph.D.  
Valerie Thacker, MAB  
Drake University**



***Play is a NEED—Not Just a WANT*** (Beisser, Gillespie, Thacker; 2011)

“Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth.” - *American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007*

**Question:** In what ways do you observe kids in.....

- Cognitive Play?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Social Play?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Physical Play?

**Study Results:** What cognitive, physical, and social play experiences are most valued?  
(Your notes here)

**Necessity of Play:**

- 100% of respondents agreed kids “need” to play.
- 20% of comments included words such as cranky, crabby, unhappy, frustrated, mad, or sad regarding what happens when they can’t play.
- Boredom and excess energy were also noted outcomes of limited playtime.

## **Play and Learning:**

- Play facilitates learning
  - Improved attentiveness
  - Creative stimulation
- Play fosters learning
  - Experiential learning
  - Social skill development

## **Structural Barriers to Play:**

- Chores
- Homework
- After school sports
- Sibling activities
- Practicing instruments

## **Putting the Research to Use:**

- Children see play as a renewal activity. They see play as motivating and as a way to increase attention, retention, and focus in learning.
- Children emphasize that play develops teamwork and problem solving skills

## **Recommendations: SCHOOL**

- Acknowledge the value of play as a tool for learning, both to facilitate structured classroom learning as well as foster experiential learning.
- Use play in enhances meaningful activities in the TAG program as well as the general classroom.

## **Recommendations: PARENTS**

- Acknowledge children's need for play in all three domains (cognitive, physical, and social).
- Allow time for self-directed play after school with limits on scheduled activities

## **Your application of PLAY**

- How will you incorporate play in your personal life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How will you incorporate play with kids?