

The older I get, the more I realize I learned everything I needed playing in preschool. I know Robert Fulghum learned all he needed in Kindergarten, but I really think it started earlier than that.

Physically and emotionally your child might appear to be ready for formal teaching at the preschool age but, as child development experts agree, playing is where your child will begin the learning process. Here are just a few things your child is learning when he or she engages in play.

When they are playing with puzzles, cooking, using magnets, constructing with blocks, making collages, or doing mazes they are building logic and mathematic skills.

When they are looking at books, listening to stories, playing games with friends, talking to friends, matching, sequencing, sorting, looking at words around the room, and singing they are building listening, reading and linguistic skills.

When they are having story time, or circle time, drawing, painting or creating, and looking at pictures they are building spatial awareness and concentration skills.

When they are climbing, riding bikes, dancing or kicking a ball they are building kinaesthetic and motor skills.

When they are engaged in solitary play, creating art, having a nap, looking at books, following a schedule or routine, using their words to talk through a problem, transitioning from one activity to another, they are building stress and time management skills.

Many parents worry if their child's preschool doesn't teach formal skills that somehow their child will be left behind. But research shows that is not the case. Countries such as Sweden, where children are not taught formal skills like reading until they are developmentally ready (ages eight and nine or older), have literacy rates of 99 per cent for people 15 years of age and over. Letting skills develop when the child shows a readiness is the most appropriate for his or her development.

Sometimes, our children won't show a readiness, or maybe we won't see the subtle signs. That's when you

Learning through play

Preschoolers begin to build skills before formal teaching starts

can have discussions with professionals in child development and mesh their ideas with your own expertise on your child.

As you begin your process of choosing a preschool for your child make sure you choose one that incorporates plenty of

play in their curriculum. Reach Child and Youth Development Society provides inclusive preschools in North and South Delta, and is offering a summer preschool program in Ladner.

■ *Camille Netherton is manager of the Delta Connex Program at Reach Child and Youth Development Society, which this year is celebrating 50 years of service. For details on the Reach Summer preschool or Fall preschool in South Delta call 604-946-6622 ext 308, or Fall preschool in North Delta call 604-596-0106. Or, visit www.reachdevelopment.org.*



Camille Netherton

Reaching Out