Excellerations

TEACHER'S ACTIVITY GUIDE

Block Play

Outdoor Learning Kit - Blocks

Here's What You Get!

- Wooden Cars and Trucks - Set of 8
- Block Play Traffic Signs - Set of 15
- Roadbuilder Set - Set of 17
- Foam Tabletop Unit Blocks - 68 Pieces
- Teacher's Activity Guide

Introduction:

Build, build, build, build! This is how we build with blocks! Building with blocks is not only a naturally interesting activity to young children, working with blocks can reinforce and teach many cognitive thinking skills. Blocks are a tangible tool for a child to use as he creates something that he imagines.

Blocks give the child an opportunity to work with the six steps to engineering and critical thinking:

Critical Thinkers can:

- Make sense of information
- Analyze
- Compare
- Contrast
- Make inferences
- Generate higher order thinking skills

The Outdoor Learning Kit - Blocks will give children concrete objects to manipulate and test.

Use the Outdoor Learning Kit - Blocks to address these Core Standards and these Guidelines from the Head Start Early Learning Framework and Kindergarten Core Standards:

- Child observes and describes phenomena (objects, materials, organisms, and events).
- Child asks a question, gathers information, and makes predictions.
- Child plans and conducts investigations and experiments.
- Child analyzes results, draws conclusions, and communicates results.
- Child uses and shares observations of local weather conditions to describe patterns over time.
- Child makes observations and asks questions to solve problems.
- Child learns a variety of strategies in solving problems.
- Child demonstrates flexibility in thinking.
- Child uses imagination in play and interactions with others.
- Child engages in play with other children
- Child activity explores objects and people to understand self, others, and objects.
- Child uses spatial awareness to understand objects and their movement in space.

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Outdoor Learning Kit - Blocks (continued)

- Child uses objects to represent something else.
- Child demonstrates increasing control, strength, and coordination of small muscles.

Uses for Outdoor Learning Kit - Blocks:

To encourage critical thinking, teachers should

– Provide opportunities for play
– Pause and wait
– Don't intervene immediately
– Ask open-ended questions
– Help children develop hypotheses
– Encourage critical thinking in new and different ways

Suggested Activities:

- Provide opportunities for play. Allow the child to explore with the Foam Table Top blocks. Free exploration should always be the first step in learning to use materials.
- Pause and wait. As the child is exploring with the blocks, resist the urge to make suggestions at first.
- Don't intervene immediately. If one of their block creations is not working (not standing up, sticking together, stable, etc.), don't intervene with suggestions immediately. Allow the child to try to discover a solution.
- Ask open-ended questions. Ask questions that may have many different answers (e.g., "What do you think might be a good way to keep the tower from falling over?" OR "Why is it important to have street signs by roads?").
- Help children develop hypotheses. Hypotheses can be educated guesses for young children. "What could we make with the blocks remembering that we only have the 48 in front of us?"
- Encourage critical thinking in new and different ways. "Could we add something else to make this activity better?"
- Using the Roadbuilder Set, have the child create a road pattern. Allow her to use trial and error to determine where to place the 17 blocks. Have her place the road signs around the road. If you are near a street, see if the child can see any real road signs that match or are similar to the ones in the kit.
- Have two or more children work together to build something from the blocks. Two heads are better than one when solving problems.
- Look for areas outside that are appropriate for building.
- Look for additional outside materials for building. Use them alone or add them to the other building materials the children have gathered.
- Have the child look at the building materials before starting. Have him develop a hypothesis about what he can build. Have him draw a picture of what he is planning to build. Compare the picture to the structure that is completed. Talk about how it turned out and if any adjustments to the hypothesis had to be made.