



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. II, No. 5

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

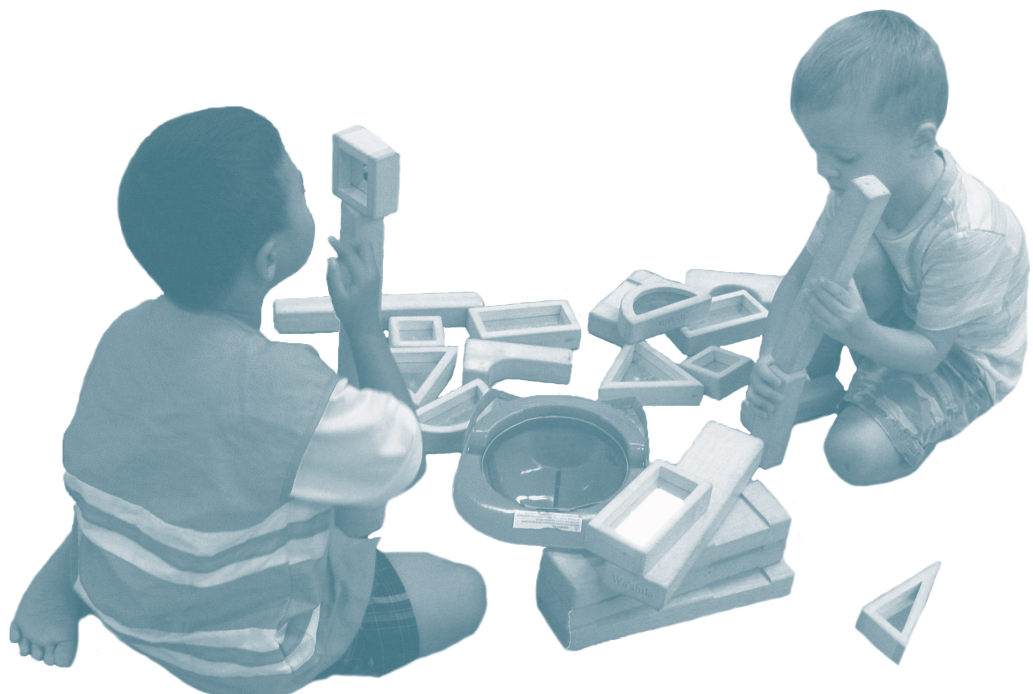
- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ **Foster curiosity and development through play**
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

Block Play Fosters Development

Children today have access to a wide range of colorful and complex playthings to engage their minds and fill their days with fun. Yet some of the most beloved, versatile, and well-used play materials in any child care environment continue to be blocks. Blocks have been used in children's play and learning for over 400 years and perhaps longer. Since 1693 when John Locke, the philosopher, suggested that children could learn their alphabet by playing with "dice and playthings with the letters on them" blocks of all shapes, sizes, and materials have been found in the homes and care environments of children of all ages. There are wooden blocks, large cardboard brick blocks, homemade blocks (milk cartons covered with contact paper), foam blocks, interlocking blocks, magnetic blocks, and so many more. In this newsletter, we will share many uses and benefits of block play for young children at different developmental stages that were identified by the authors and editors of *Young Children*, the Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.



February 2016

Blocks—the Ideal Material for Development and Learning

Block play supports children in all areas of development. As children play with blocks, it's important for you to know the benefits of block play and share what a child learns with families in your program.

The following are some of the ways that block play supports children's learning and development:

Imagination. Children follow their own plan or share a friend's vision and work together to create something new and exciting.

Creativity. Blocks and other loose parts and props can be moved freely by children, to be combined and recombined in countless ways.

Language. Blocks offer many ways for non-verbal or dual language learners to explore, express themselves, and demonstrate what they are learning.

Mathematics. Concepts and skills, including length, measurement, comparison, number, estimation, symmetry, and balance are practiced and strengthened.



Continuity and permanence. Block play engages spatial sense and motor abilities; block creations can stand for an indefinite period of time.

Problem solving. Children think through situations and ask themselves questions such as, "I want to build something. I want to make it bigger. How do I do that?"

Science. Blocks offer opportunities to test hypotheses (e.g., Would I be able to build a taller tower if I turn the blocks on its side?) and build scientific reasoning.

Physical development. Block play requires small and large motor skills to manipulate and maneuver pieces.

Self-Esteem. Children discover that they have ideas and that they can bring their ideas to life by creating, transforming, demolishing, and recreating something unique.

Social and emotional growth. Blocks help children learn to take turns and share materials, develop new friendships, become self-reliant, increase attention span, cooperate with others, and develop self-esteem and feelings of success—all important school readiness skills.

Block Play for Infants and Explorers

Young infants are sensory learners. As infants progress from mouthing blocks to mobile explorers, they manipulate blocks in more meaningful ways. Here are some tips for introducing blocks for infants:

- Through mouthing, they will discover the weight and texture of the block.
- A few soft foam filled blocks with bells or other noise-making devices inside will stimulate infants' interest in sounds.
- They will carry the blocks, stack them, and pile them up. They also enjoy dumping and pouring, so a clean, leftover clear plastic jug (from Arare or similar snack) can be used for baby to drop in small wooden blocks and dump them out again.



Block Play for Preschool-aged Children

Children this age are more likely to play together enlisting very sophisticated skills in building more complex structures. As preschoolers engage in block play, keep in mind the following:

Block Play for Toddlers

As children become toddlers, their block play can become more creative. Children this age may not be ready to let others join in their play. A protected block play area with many types of back-up blocks for other children who want to join in can alleviate potential disputes. Other things to keep in mind are:

- Include props such as plastic animals and small vehicles into the block area.
- Have multiple sets of blocks (at least 10 of each kind) so that children can independently stack them or make small enclosures for their animals.
- Children will begin to use blocks to represent familiar objects such as houses, towers, or roads for their small cars and trucks.
- Soft blocks of different sizes are fun for children to build high structures that they can knock down without damaging anything.
- They benefit from having very large collections of blocks of many shapes and sizes including arches, ramps, and gutters.
- Unit blocks that are based on proportions of 1:2:4 advance critical math skills in solving problems of proportion, symmetry, and balance.
- Much of block play falls within the category of dramatic play. Children this age are able to represent interior space and separate objects within their construction. They may coordinate landmarks and buildings, creating mini environments with a developing sense of scale. They are working more now in three dimensions: height, width, and depth. They will create more layers including ceilings and rooftops.
- Children develop the school-readiness skills of persistence and self-control, through the trials and errors of constructing and deconstructing with their playmates.

Citations:

Designing and using a developmentally appropriate block area for infants and toddlers. *Young Children*, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 6–17.

Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.



REMINDER: Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of “increased knowledge.” Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

Learning to Grow Quality Child Care for Registered Home-Based Providers is a project of University of Hawai‘i, Windward Community College with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services ★ 808-462-4700 ★ www.learningtogrowhawaii.org