

Sharing Thoughts About the Value of Toys

Dear Families:

Toys are designed for children's enjoyment. They are also important tools for learning. When children play with toys, they learn how to move, how things work, and how to communicate with and relate to others. Here are just a few of the ways that toys help your child grow and learn.

When your child does this...

- bats a ball to make it move
- rolls a toy car
- puts pieces in a form board
- snaps plastic beads together
- builds with blocks

Your child is learning...

- cause and effect
- about movement and space
- concepts such as shape, size, color
- eye-hand coordination
- how objects can be used

What You Can Do at Home

Here are some ideas that can help your child make the most of playing with toys at home.

- **You are your child's favorite toy.** Your interest and involvement make playing with toys even more fun and engaging.
- **A few good toys are better than too many.** Too many toys can overwhelm a young child. It's far better to have a few good toys that can be used in a variety of ways.
- **Choose simple toys at first.** Good toys for infants are those that they can explore with all their senses. Plastic rings and rattles that they can grasp, squeeze, and mouth are especially good. Mobile infants enjoy playing with toys that they can push or pull, such as plastic lawn mowers. They also like toys with movable parts, such as doors, knobs, big buttons, switches, and so on.
- **Pick toys that challenge your child.** Toddlers are ready for simple puzzles with 4–5 pieces, plastic and wooden cars and trucks, blocks, shape sorters, nesting cups, and riding toys. Your 2-year-old will enjoy puzzles with more pieces, matching games, large beads and laces, balls, and blocks of all kinds.
- **Common household objects make wonderful toys.** An empty box, large empty thread spools, pots and pans, plastic food containers, and kitchen utensils are just a few of the things that young children use as toys.

Whether you buy or make your child's toys, what's most important is that you take pleasure in watching your child play, talk about what he or she is doing, and respond enthusiastically to each new discovery.

Sincerely,