

The Power of Play

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You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato

The latest addition to the Exchange Press bookstore is David Elkind's new book, [**The Power of Play: How Spontaneous, Imaginative Activities Lead to Happier, Healthier Children.**](#)

In the book Elkind makes this observation... "Several studies have compared children who attended preschool with an academic orientation with comparable children who attended a play-oriented program.

The results showed *no later academic advantage* for children who attended the academic program.

In addition, there was some evidence that children who attended the academic program demonstrated higher levels of test anxiety, were less creative, and had more negative attitudes about school than did the children attending the play program.

The investigators concluded that since the academic program has no demonstrable benefits and a number of possible risks, there is little to defend it (Hirsch-Pacek, 1991).

"Other investigations demonstrate that low-income children profit from attending a quality early childhood education program, particularly when the program is play-based.

In one study, children matched for IQ were placed in one of three types of preschool programs: a traditional play-based program, a

Montessori program, and a didactic (emphasizing academic skills and rote learning methods) program.

Traditional and Montessori preschool programs were more effective in promoting academic achievement than were the didactic preschool programs.

The group difference in math and reading achievements favoring the children from non-academic programs were still evident at eighth grade (Miller, 1983).

Hirsch-Pacek, K. (1991). "Pressure or Challenge in Preschool: How Academic Programs Affect Children." In **Academic Instruction in Early Childhood**, edited by L. Rescorla, M. Hyson, and K. Hirsch-Pacek. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Miller, L. B., & Bizzell, R. P. (1983). "Long-Term Effects of Four Preschool Programs." **Child Development**, 54(3): 727-741.

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