

Perhaps you wondered ... why block play is so important in early childhood.

As both preschool and kindergarten classes begin thematic units on Building, we should all consider the developmental benefits of block building, along with the various levels of block play that we can expect as children progress. As you can see from the photos below, we even build with blocks outside. The winter months afford great opportunities for indoor building, and may also provide ways to transfer the learning outside if we get lots of snow. Enjoy!

Developmental Benefits of Block Building

- **Self-Esteem & Independence** – developing confidence in mastering diverse materials, taking responsibility for following the rules and cleaning up the space, managing emotions when structures fall, etc.
- **Interaction & Cooperation** – sharing materials, coordinating actions, negotiating cooperative designs, etc.
- **Communication** – learning new vocabulary, discussing plans, writing labels or drawing blueprints, reenacting stories, etc.
- **Discovery & Exploration** – exploring concepts of gravity as they relate to balance and stability, counting and measuring building features, strengthening geometric concepts and spatial skills, discovering multiple solutions to building problems, appreciating the value of learning from “mistakes”, etc.
- **Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety** – strengthening eye-hand coordination, building strength to handle large blocks, managing body movements to avoid bumping structures, following safety procedures, etc.
- **Artistic Expression & Appreciation** – experimenting with design & decoration while combining shapes, colors, textures, noticing varied features of buildings, replicating structure from designs, imagining new constructions, etc.



Levels of Block Play:

Children typically progress during the early childhood years from **carrying** and otherwise exploring blocks, to **building** mostly in rows (either horizontal or vertical), to **bridging** spaces, to **enclosing** spaces, to **making decorative patterns**, to **naming** structures that they build intentionally (e.g., saying they're making a zoo), to **symbolizing** known buildings with blocks.



Adult Support For Block Building

- Build **WITH the children** to gently support their developmental progression without directing or frustrating them.
- Take the **child's lead**, follow the child's interest, and provide only the level of support they need.
- Add people, animals, vehicles, etc. to the selection of blocks to **extend the play**.
- Allow children to combine a **variety of blocks**.
- Consider building with other materials, such as cups,
- Allow children to continue working on a structure for a **period of days**.
- Encourage children to **disassemble buildings as they assemble them** – one block at a time (i.e., rather than knocking or kicking them down).