

Intentional Thinking

A Note From Your Pedagogical Leader

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Hello Families,

Special points of interest:

- *Blocks are a critical early learning tool.*
- *Block play supports children's development in many different domains.*
- *Children's block play usually progresses through a series of distinct stages.*

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In the fall of 2016, the Child Care and Learning Centre began developing a pedagogical leadership position—first as a pilot project and then as a permanent position in the winter of 2018. The first question most people ask is “What is a Pedagogical Leader?”. Pedagogy is the study of how learning takes place, including the philosophy and practices that support it (Coughlin & Baird, 2013). A Pedagogical Leader supports an early learning and care organization with developing their philosophy, knowledge, and practices related to early learning.

This position is an additional investment that the Centre has chosen to make to ensure that our early learning and care programs are of the

highest quality. Pedagogical Leaders are usually employees of larger organizations, such as municipalities, and tend to work in many different Centres at once. The CCLC's choice to employ its own dedicated Pedagogical Leader is a strong statement of its focus on quality.

Over the last two years in this position, I have been behind the scenes supporting many of the Centre's developments and initiatives. Within this role, I work closely with our Educators to support reflective practice, intentional choices, and ensure that we stay on the cutting edge of early learning. I also instruct the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition's third year undergraduate practicum course

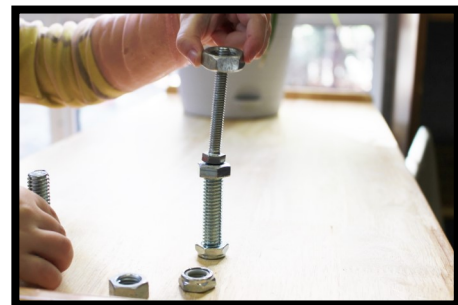
that is based in the CCLC.

At the CCLC, we recognize that partnerships with families have a tremendous impact on children's learning and development. My goal with this publication is to engage you as partners by helping to explain some of the choices our Educators are making within their programs and to share some of the research within the field of early learning that has influenced us.

I am always happy to connect with families, so please feel to reach out at anytime.

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CHILD CARE &
LEARNING CENTRE
STUDENT AFFAIRS

We aspire to a future of empowered citizenship for each member, where relationships are respected as partnerships for shared and continual learning and where the wonder of childhood is celebrated.

PROGRAMMING SPOTLIGHT

The Importance of Blocks in Early Learning

Wooden blocks are a critical tool for children's early learning. They come in all shapes and sizes and can be used in a variety of ways. You will see that your child's classroom will always have some sort of wooden block out— whether it be unit blocks, coloured blocks, tree blocks or another variation.

What are the Benefits of Block Play?

Block play supports children's learning and development in a variety of domains, such as cognitive, physical, creative, and social-emotional (Hirsch, 1996; Hobenshield Tepylo, Moss, & Stephenson, 2015; Koralek, 2015). While building with blocks, children are required to problem solve how to represent their ideas. Problem solving is also critical for their progression to taller and stronger structures. Often times, children work together while building their representations which offers an important opportunity for them to negotiate and collaborate with their peers. Research has also shown a correlation with children's block play when they are younger and academics when they are older. For example, a study by Wolfgang, Stannard and Jones found a positive correlation between preschool block performance and later math achievement in middle and high school (2001).



The Stages of Block Play

Did you know that children's block play tends to progress through several distinct stages (Braks, 2017; Hirsch, 1996)? What stages of block play do you notice most often in your child's explorations?

Stage 1—Carrying:	The child carries blocks around and does not yet use them for construction.
Stage 2—Stacking:	The child begins building with the blocks, usually in rows (either horizontal or vertical). There is much repetition in this early building stage.
Stage 3—Bridge Building:	The child creates bridges with the blocks by placing two blocks with a space between them, connected by a third block.
Stage 4—Enclosures:	The child focuses their building on creating enclosures (e.g. blocks placed as a fence around a group of animals). Bridging and enclosures are among the earliest technique building problems that children have to solve.
Stage 5—Patterns & Symmetry:	The child becomes more imaginative in their block play. They create more elaborate designs, using pattern and balance.
Stage 6—Structures (Early):	The child names structures for dramatic play purposes related to the function of the building.
Stage 7—Structures (Later):	The child often reproduces actual structures that are known to them. They frequently engage in dramatic play around the block structures.

