

# Cassadaga Valley Central School District

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY, HOBBIES, AND SUMMERTIME FUN!



“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning.”

– Diane Ackerman

Summertime is most often looked at by kids as the time they have a break from school. No homework, no assignments, no projects, no tests, just fun. However, having fun can also be educational for a developing child/adolescent, especially in the summertime when school is not in session! According to the [Academy of American Pediatrics](#), play can assist children/adolescents in multiple ways including (but not limited to) improving creativity/imagination, emotional and physical strength, improving cognition and assisting in brain development. In play, children are able to be whoever they want to be, work towards and achieve dreams. They are able to engage in the world around them in a healthy way and create memories while doing so.

### SO, ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLAY?

There are multiple different types of play that children engage in. These include:

1. **Unoccupied Play:** the first stage of play of observing the world around them
2. **Independent Play:** teaches a child how to entertain themselves
3. **Onlooker Play:** observes other children playing

4. **Parallel Play:** play together without influencing the play of their peer
5. **Associative Play:** playing separately but involved in the play with each other
6. **Cooperative Play:** play together and social skills are being developed and improved
7. **Competitive Play:** think sports!
8. **Constructive Play:** building, fitting, and manipulating things together
9. **Drama/Fantasy Play:** playing dress up or assuming another role
10. **Physical Play:** throwing, climbing, riding a bike
11. **Symbolic Play:** art, singing, music, working on expression



### Elementary Aged Students

Even though summer time can be busy for families, it is still important to make time for elementary aged students to engage in

play, whether they are with peers or with families. Children engage in play at times without realizing they are engaging in play. For this age group, it teaches them how to navigate social and emotional environments, problem solving, teaches safety, self-discipline, and can teach students also how to work through feelings such as anger, anxieties, and stress. Executive functioning skills can be practiced along with counting, vocabulary, writing, learning social cues, practicing empathy, self-regulation. Physical play also looks to improve physical health!

*How can parents encourage play in children this age?*

- Plan play with your child
- Create a space within the home for play
- Find fun in the objects/materials that you have at home
- Acknowledge risk: accept that they may fall down but they will be able to explore
- Model types of play
- Wait out the “I’m bored” statements that they might say- do not give up if they do not want to do something right away



### *Sample Activities*

Build a fort for a movie night, play a sport together, teach them one of your hobbies, build a birdhouse, be outside together, spend time finding a way to utilize a space for play (such as kitchen, garage, basement)

*How to tell if it's working?*

You may see an increase in

- Kids making choices
- Kids spending more time exploring, creating, and using trial and error methods
- Kids demonstrating pure happiness!

### **Middle/High School Aged Students**

For older students, engaging in forms of play can assist in brain development around areas such as the prefrontal cortex which is the decision making part of their brains. Play assists in synaptic pruning, which helps to build up synapses in the brain used more frequently. Play can also aid in practicing other important coping skills for adolescents such as working through conflict/resolution on their own, practicing anger management and breathing exercises, and more.

*Types of play most seen in adolescents:*

- Social Play: engaging in play with peers or adults (such as making a band, performing dances)
- Independent Play: engaging in activities on their own like writing, art, crossword puzzles, training pets, crocheting, sewing, etc.

- Guided Play: play within a context set up by adults
- Physical Play: helps to burn off excessive energy to improve physical well being
- Social/Emotional: helps in adapting to different social settings and improving emotional self regulation



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**“It is paradoxical that many educators and parents still differentiate between a time for learning and a time for play without seeing the vital connection between them.” -Leo F. Buscaglia**

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## **Where Can I Learn More?**

[American Academy of Pediatrics:  
Importance of Play](#)

[The Importance of Play for Adolescents](#)

[Summer Activities for Kids](#)

[Summer Activities for Teens](#)