



Make No Mistake—Play Is Crucial, Experts Say

(NAPSA)—While most kids score an “A” in play, many parents need to understand just how crucial play is for their children’s development.

That’s the consensus experts share in “The American State of Play” report published by The Genius of Play™, a national movement to raise awareness of play’s vital benefits.

“The latest research shows that children are spending less time playing than ever before and it’s a problem,” says Dana Points, a parenting expert and one of the report’s contributors. “Play is one of the most essential elements of learning, helping kids develop social, emotional and cognitive skills. Yet overly structured schedules, increased screen time and diminishing recesses in schools are getting in the way.”

To help your child learn, explore, create and evolve through play, check out these tips:

- **Engage in All Types of Play.** Kids learn through all play, but not all play must be structured and not all play is the same. Kids may take part in active, cooperative, creative, even solitary play in a single afternoon, with and without actual toys.
- **Use Play as a Learning Tool.** Enrolling children in a program to learn a skill is not the same as just letting kids play. The pressure parents feel to make sure their kids are getting the best training can be counterproductive to the positive emotional, social and skill-based learning they get through play.
- **Recognize the Power of Recess.** Recess helps kids learn. Research shows that children are more attentive after recess.
- **Trust Your Kids, Within Boundaries.** Teach kids problem-solving skills to



Parenting experts and educators say that if parents understood just how crucial play was for their children’s development, they’d encourage their kids to play more often.

help them make better decisions and then set certain parameters in terms of knowing where they are, giving them space and trusting their judgment. That’s how kids learn independence, competence, and confidence they need for success in life.

- **Guide Children’s Tech Use.** Give kids time to explore virtual worlds and tech-based play but set limits, just as you do with everything else. Parents can be role models in how to use technology in a responsible way.
- **Let Kids Lead the Way.** Parents learn much more from children when they interact and play with them on their terms. Just being present plays a significant role.

More expert advice and everyday play ideas based on a child’s age or developmental stage are available at **TheGeniusOfPlay.org**. To support The Genius of Play’s mission to bring more play into kids’ lives and get daily play inspiration and facts, follow @GeniusOfPlay on Facebook and Instagram.