

8 Cleveland Ave.

Morris Plains, NJ

07950

## *Why I chose a play-based learning curriculum for my children ~ Kaitlin Mulcahy*

Play-based learning – this is the reason that my family and I chose the Morris Plains Cooperative Play School. As an early childhood development expert, an infant and early childhood mental health specialist, and a family play therapist, I'm informed by the compelling research on

increasingly difficult to find preschool programs that embrace this focus on playful learning. Instead, uninformed policy makers have forced rote, didactic, direct instruction into preschool and kindergarten classrooms. This ignores recent research that tells us that *play is the*

***“Play is the most neurologically appropriate form of learning in early childhood.”***

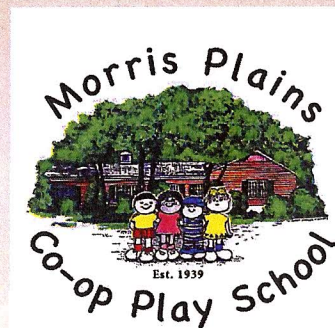
the benefits of play on the academic development of infants, toddlers and young children. As a parent, I believe strongly in the positive power of play, and can see the benefits of play in my own children's social and emotional development.

However, despite decades of significant evidence on the importance of play in all aspects of early childhood development, it is becoming

*most neurologically appropriate modality for learning in early childhood.*

Thankfully, the **Morris Plains Cooperative Play School** puts this evidence into practice to create a culture and community of informed, purposeful, playful learning.

The **Morris Plains Cooperative Play School** uses play to support and enhance all aspects of child



*Kaitlin Mulcahy, M.A., M.A., LPC, IMH-E IV-C*



Kaitlin is the parent of two children attending the Morris Plains Cooperative Play School. She holds a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology, advanced training as an infant mental health clinical mentor, certified early intervention specialist, and family play therapist, and is pursuing a doctorate degree in Family Studies. She works as the Associate Director of the Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health at Montclair State University.

*Resources informing this statement will be made available upon request*



development, highlighting the following evidence-based pillars of early childhood education:

-----

**Play enhances the foundational brain capacities necessary for all future learning**

Research now tells us that children's brains develop sequentially and in order, meaning that the capacities for regulation, movement, emotions, creativity, empathy and sensory-based exploration have to be developed before capacities for reason, factual learning, and rote memory. Play enhances and expands these foundational capacities that are the necessary base for all future learning. This means that the more a child plays with messy glue, dances to music, builds with blocks, makes dinner in the pretend kitchen, or plays doctor, the more likely they are to succeed academically.

**Play enhances children's development**

Play enhances all other aspects of child development, including physical, social and emotional development. When children play, they engage in full body movement, from the small muscle movements of finger painting or building with blocks, to the large muscle movements of pulling up on a playground climber. Through playing with others, they grow in empathy, learn the ability to regulate emotions and gratification, and gain the ability to problem solve effectively. Although some may consider these as "soft" academic skills, most parents know that these capacities are required for effective learning.

**Play enhances self-esteem, self-worth and resiliency**

Play brings about feelings of mastery and joy, and induces a play-state that is neurologically akin to restorative meditation. Through play, children begin to explore, try out new ideas,

think creatively, and do what feels right to them – all activities that build the self-esteem and feelings of self-worth necessary to raise resilient children.

-----

Each and every day, I am confident in our decision to have chosen a play-based learning curriculum for our children at the **Morris Plains Cooperative Play School**. I know that they are receiving great care and love. I know that they are exposed to appropriate neurological stimulation to prepare their brains and bodies for elementary school. I know that they are building their feelings of self-esteem and of mastery that will help make them resilient in life. And, above all, I know that they are having a lot of fun! Play is learning and it is so much more! The Morris Plains Cooperative Play School – what a place to play and grow!

***The Morris Plains Cooperative Play School...***

***where collaboration between parents and teachers creates exceptional play-based learning***