



Malden Public Schools Title I Parent Connection

The Playground and the 3 R's

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Your local playground represents a wonderful opportunity to develop some fundamental skills that are foundations for the 3 R's, reading, writing and arithmetic. Yes, it is true.

Playgrounds are set up to allow for free play, giving children a wide range of choices. The choices allow for children to explore their environment, which actually leads to faster brain development. This is especially true for young children who are learning through a combination of their senses and different motor activities.

Hanging from the monkey bars, climbing ladders, sliding down the slide, jumping from one part to another, and grabbing handles all are strengthening your child's motor development. Most playgrounds are designed to help children develop balance and coordination, overall strength, depth perception, and visual spatial awareness. For example, swings are actually one of the best ways for your child to develop balance and coordination which prepares them for the task of tracking the words on a page when they begin reading. The grabbing and releasing your child will do on the ladders and monkey bars will strengthen their hand muscles which will prepare them for the writing tasks they will do in school.

Playgrounds are natural social environments where families and children gather. Spontaneous games emerge from groups of children who play together. Often, we are struck by the creativity of the

games children create on their own. As children play they are negotiating social relationships both when they are cooperating and then later settling conflicts. In addition, the play that emerges between children and adults encourages communication and thus language development. The stronger a child's language, the better their foundation will be for reading and the writing of their stories.

One of the most important lessons learned from the playground are the long lasting skills of confidence and resiliency. Children begin by mastering the smaller less challenging elements of the playground. They watch others conquer more challenging tasks. They attempt to master new tasks, sometimes succeeding and other times, failing. Over time, as they gather strength and sometimes with the help of their caregivers, they master even the most challenging aspects of the playground. A valuable lesson is learned, with practice and confidence we can conquer many challenges we will face while both young and old.

So on these last few cold brisk days of autumn before winter arrives, head on over to the playground down the street and spend some time playing. Don't forget using balls, bike riding, and games of tag on the playground which will also equally enhance learning. You may not want to let your child know that your intention is two-fold, fun and learning.