



Summer of Play 3-Part Series (Part 1)

CHILD'S PLAY 101:

HOW PLAY BUILDS THE BRAIN

[CLICK HERE](#)



Watch Video Now
Certification

www.weskoolhouse.com



Video

Please review the professional development training video; you will need approximately 60 minutes to complete the training.



Proprietary and confidential content of We Skoolhouse LLC. Intended for recipient use only. Do not reproduce, distribute and/or adapt any part of the content. All rights reserved. Copyright We Skoolhouse LLC.

Certification

Please take a moment to complete the learning review provided. Upon submission, your certification will be sent to you immediately.

Start

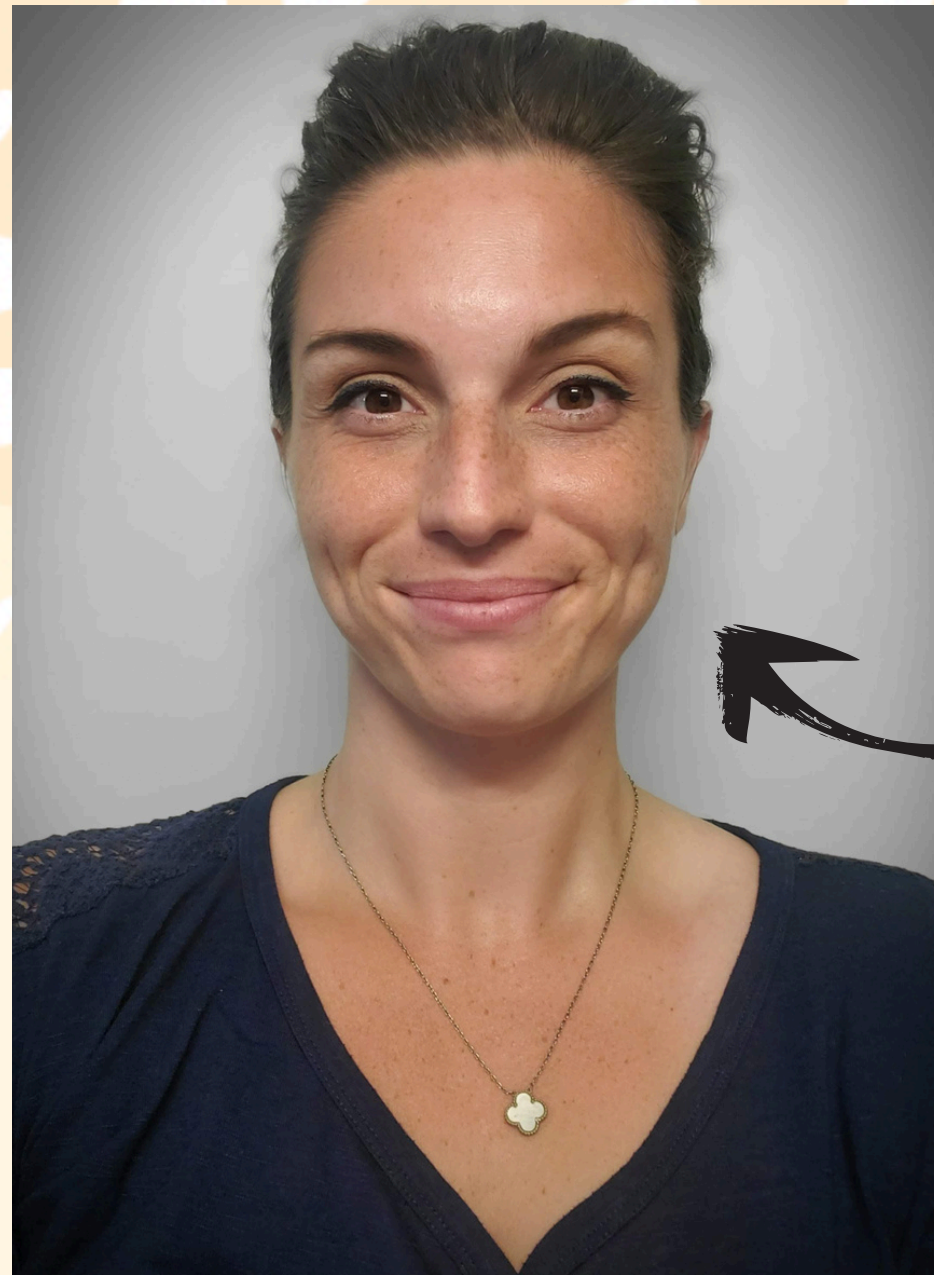


Proprietary and confidential content of We Skoolhouse LLC. Intended for recipient use only. Do not reproduce, distribute and/or adapt any part of the content. All rights reserved. Copyright We Skoolhouse LLC.

Before We Begin...

- **This is a recorded session.** The slides and recording will be emailed to you, so you can watch it anytime at your convenience.
- **If you've signed up for Certification,** you'll receive a session recording by email along with a brief learning review. Once completed, your personalized certificate will be emailed as a PDF.
 - If you'd like to receive certification please visit: weskoolhouse.com/books
- **If you have questions,** please drop them in the chat. We'll do our best to answer everyone's questions at the end of the presentation.





THAT'S ME



AND THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS...



My web-slinging 6.5 year old daughter



Our cats (Venom & Carnage)

Stephanie Seidler



- Director & Content Creator of WSH
- M.Ed. in School Leadership
- 20+ Years in ECE Field



Creating children's picture books



What is Play?

True play is self-chosen, intrinsically motivating, and driven by curiosity, exploration, and joy (triggering dopamine, which boosts learning and memory.)

It is a natural and essential way in which children interact with the world, make sense of their experiences, and **develop foundational cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills** (typically utilizing all domains simultaneously).

It's Personalized and Adaptive: Play meets each child exactly where they are developmentally, offering the perfect level of challenge.

It May Look Like:

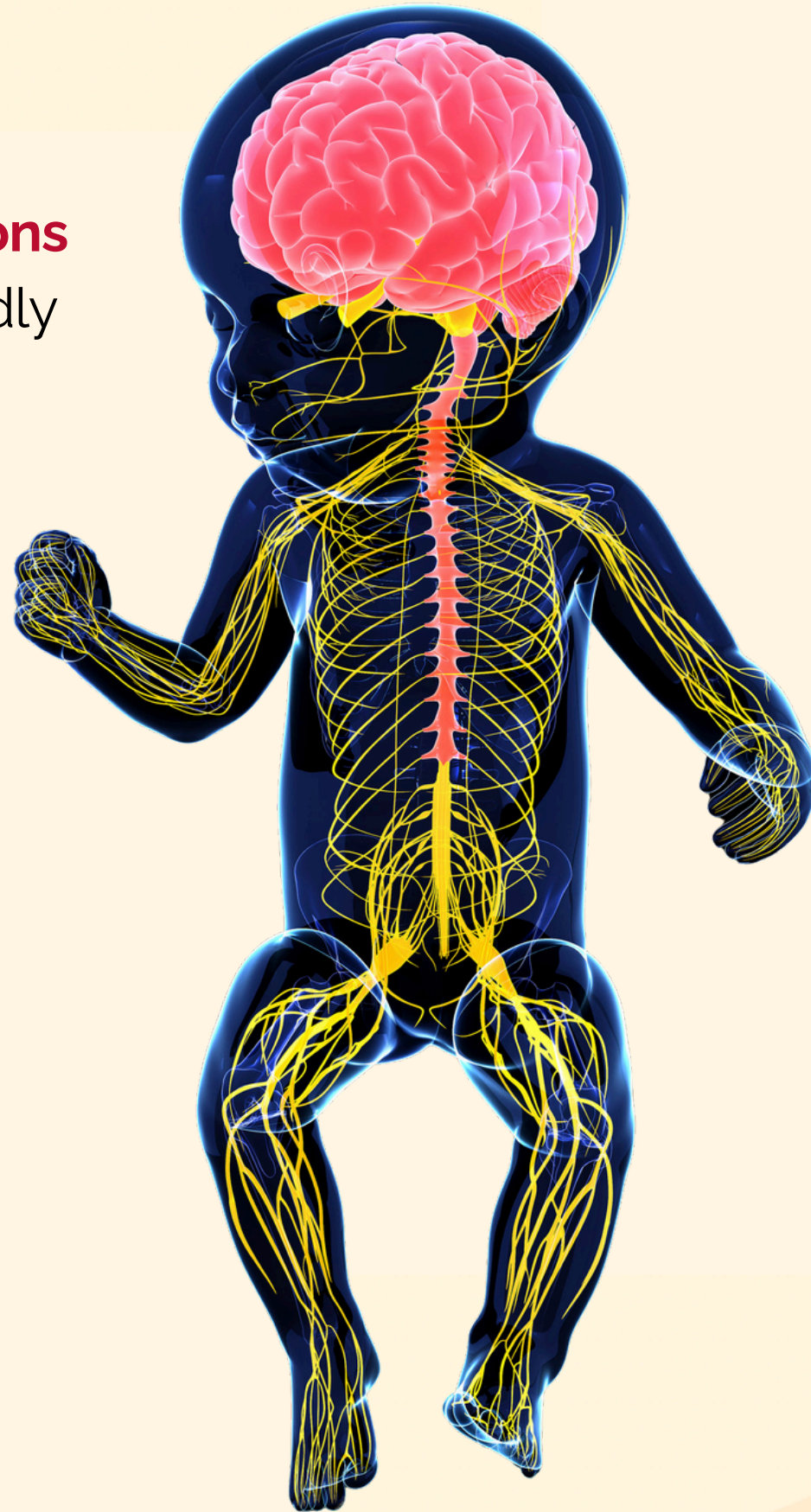
- **Physical + Sensory** (running, climbing, pouring, squeezing)
- **Creative + Imaginative** (painting, storytelling, pretend play)
- **Cognitive + Social** (building, negotiating roles, problem-solving)

Play is a biological drive (just like sleep or hunger) wired into the brain for survival, adaptation, and long-term well-being. It is the mechanism through which the brain builds intelligence, resilience, and emotional health.



Brain Development in the First Five Years

- **At birth, the brain has most of its neurons but few connections.** Experiences rapidly wire these neurons into networks—a process called synaptogenesis.
- **By age 5, the brain is 90% of its adult size—but it's experience, not age, that wires it.** Early years set the foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and resilience.



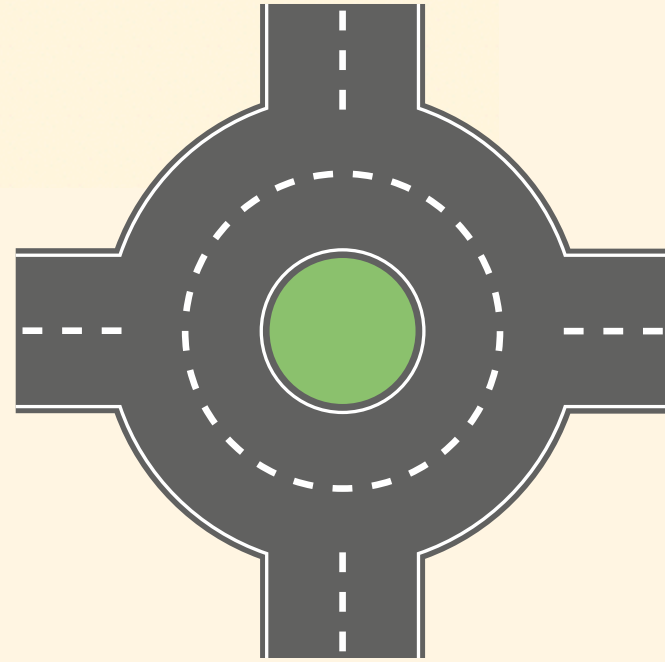
- **The brain develops from the bottom up:** starting with survival (brainstem), then movement (cerebellum), emotions (limbic system), and finally reasoning (prefrontal cortex). Children need a strong foundation of movement, emotional safety, and connection before higher learning can take root.
- **Repetition strengthens, neglect prunes:** The more a pathway is used, the stronger it gets. Unused connections fade. Experience literally shapes the architecture of the brain.



How Play Builds the Brain



Think of the 4 parts of the brain
**(Brainstem, Cerebellum,
Limbic System & Prefrontal
Cortex)** as major “cities.”



In order to connect the cities, you need
to lay down roads **(neural pathways)**.



The senses are the delivery trucks. Every
sound, texture, smell, and movement
brings in more building materials for
the brain's construction crew.



**Play is the crew paving the brain's
highways.** Every new experience,
every engaged sense, lays the path
faster and more efficiently.



**Repetition is the concrete that
strengthens and smooths the roads
built through play,** making future
learning faster, easier, and efficient.

- **Brainstem:** Controls basic survival functions (breathing, heart rate, reflexes).
- **Cerebellum:** Coordinates movement, balance, & motor.
- **Limbic System:** Processes emotions, memory, & bonding.
- **Prefrontal Cortex:** Manages thinking, planning, self-control, and decision-making.



What Are We Really Building?

Traits We Want to Wire for Life	Traits We Often Prioritize Instead
Problem-solving (How to get a ball unstuck)	Obedience (doing what told without question)
Resilience & Flexible Thinking (rebuilding a block tower in a new way)	Compliance (following adult directions at all times)
Creativity (inventing with art materials)	Sitting still (staying put during circle time)
Emotional Regulation (managing frustration while playing)	Rote drills (repeating flashcards)
Communication & Collaboration (narrating and planning play)	Surface-level memorization (reciting shapes or letters)
Curiosity & Focus (becoming deeply engaged in exploration)	Quiet participation (present but passive)



What's in Their Play?

Math Concepts:

Measuring and comparing sand quantities, experimenting with volume, and understanding cause-&-effect relationships.

Sensory Integration:

Stimulates multiple senses simultaneously, supporting sensory integration and processing abilities.

Scientific Exploration:

Offers opportunities for scientific exploration, such as observing erosion, water absorption, and texture changes.

Focus & Concentration:

Encourages sustained attention and concentration as children engage in their creative projects.

Physical Development:

Digging, scooping, pouring, sifting, and shaping sand enhances hand-eye coordination, spatial planning, coordination, strength, and balance.

Social & Emotional:

Improves self-regulation and self-expression, while supporting teamwork, negotiation, turn-taking, & communication skills.

Language Skills

Expands vocabulary as children describe their ideas & experiences.

Creativity & Imagination:

Encourages imaginative thinking as children create and construct various scenarios and stories.

- Intrinsic motivation and Initiation
- Independence and Decision-making
- Autonomy and Confidence
- Self-regulation and Self-expression
- Improved Focus and Concentration
- Teamwork, Collaboration, and Empathy
- Cooperation, Negotiation, & Turn-taking
- Communication & Language Development
- Sensory Processing and Tactile Concepts
- Problem-solving and Critical Thinking
- Creative and Innovative Thinking
- Imagination and Dramatic Play (Perspective taking, and Storytelling).
- Order and Sequencing
- Math Concepts (counting, sorting, measurement, classification, and volume).
- Muscle Strength and Endurance
- Science Concepts (Observations, Predictions, Physics of Flow, Density, Mass, and Matter)
- Spatial Planning and Depth Perception
- Balance and Coordination
- Improved Sleep-wake Cycle (+ Vitamin D)



How Do I Support Play?

- **Prioritize daily child-led play (ideally outdoors as much as possible).** Unstructured time (especially in the morning or before rest) helps children regulate, explore, and process their world through movement and imagination.
- **Create a safe, open space for free exploration.** Keep materials minimal and open-ended. Avoid unnecessary redirection or turning play into a lesson—let them lead.
- **Independent play builds essential skills.** It fosters confidence, creativity, autonomy, decision-making, & problem-solving.
- **Join them with presence, not perfection.** Just 20 minutes of focused, phone-free play each day can deeply strengthen your bond. Follow their lead, be silly, and don't stress the mess—it's part of the magic.

ADDITIONAL PRO TIPS:



Let go of expectations



Let frustration in



Tap into your inner child



Questions? Let's Hear Them!

- Add your comments or questions in the chat!
- You can purchase today's webinar and **get certification here:** weskoolhouse.com/books

Want More Guidance? Become a Member Today!

Sign up at weskoolhouse.com for a monthly or annual membership and get:

- Unlimited access to all past and upcoming webinars
- A full library of printable PDFs for parents & teachers of children ages 0–6
- Quick-tip videos with fast, practical guidance for home or classroom
- **Coming soon!** New mobile app to access resources on the go!



NEXT WEBINAR: (Part 2) Patterns of Play: Understanding Stages & Schemas
When: Wednesday, August 20th (12:00PM EST)

