



Kindergarten

Where Play and Learning Can Meet

About the Documentary

What can kindergarteners gain from play-based learning? This documentary explores the advantages associated with a play-based approach in kindergarten and features stories of how two Illinois school districts—Valley View School District 365U and Elgin Area School District U-46—made the transition to play-based learning. The documentary also includes scientific findings about the cognitive and social-emotional benefits of play from experts Dr. Roberta Golinkoff (University of Delaware), Dr. Christina Weiland (University of Michigan), and Dr. Eboni Howard (American Institutes for Research).

“Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet” was produced in partnership with WTTW Channel 11 and the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance at Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest.

Intended Audience

REL Midwest created this documentary as a tool for educators and parents to learn about play-based learning in early childhood education. The documentary focuses on districts in Illinois, but the information and evidence shared in the program offer important information for people and groups based outside the state.

Discussion Questions

- What concepts or themes from the documentary resonate with you?
- What are your reactions to the play-based approach to learning and research about play-based learning presented in the documentary?
- What challenges do you see in implementing a play-based learning approach? What are possible ways to overcome these challenges?
- Would the play-based learning approach work in your school, district, and/or state? What other approaches to early childhood education have worked in your school, district, and/or state?
- What do you still want to know about play-based learning?
- What are some examples of knowledge or skills that children learn more efficiently through play? What are some examples of knowledge or skills that children learn more efficiently through teacher modeling?
- How can teachers assess student learning in a play-based kindergarten classroom?



Scan the QR code to watch the documentary.

About REL Midwest

REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners in seven Midwest states to conduct applied research and provide training, coaching, and technical support to create a more evidence-based education system. Visit the REL Midwest website to learn more: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/default.aspx>.

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