Learning through Play – Elissa Stafford (Director)

It is important that parents understand that we are not a school. We are a kindergarten. Children are in a formal school environment for at least 13 years. When they are at kinder they need to play, they need to be allowed to be children.

Children at a young age learn best through play. Research proves this and we see it everyday in the kinder room. Children in a play-based learning environment are more natural to progress in their neurological development.

Research shows that Sweden has one of the best Early Childhood Education and Care systems in the world. In Sweden they believe children need more time to be kids without the pressure of performance based exercises and tests. Children in Sweden attend kindergarten at the age of 6 and begin their formal education at 7. In the Pre School years, reading and literacy are not matters of concern. Pre School is not geared towards quantifiable achievements like learning to count, recite the alphabet etc. When Swedish children leave Pre School they have not had any formal learning experiences and cannot read or write. But by the age of 10, Swedish children excel in literacy and are the leader in the European literacy table. Sweden also has the lowest levels of illiterate children. They believe that children at the age of 7 are more excited to be going to school to learn how to read and write because previously they have had the opportunity to be children and play.

With all of this in mind, let me give you some examples of how literacy and numeracy are naturally embedded in our play-based program:

Look, I have put 6 dinosaurs on the red circle.

Elissa, look at the picture I painted, can you write my story?

I am making a robot and I need some string, can you help me?

I need all the long blocks so I can balance the smaller ones on top.

Can you read me a story?

Look, I can write my name with finger paint.

I’m pouring you a cup of tea. Would you like half and cup or a full cup?

I am the green snail and when I throw the dice I have to move my snail 5 steps.

Look, I have built 7 sandcastles.

This is a minute snapshot of some of the conversations happening in our kinder room everyday but they show us how the children are constantly learning and exploring new concepts and developing skills through play. Like you do at home, we automatically and naturally include numeracy and literacy into our everyday lives:

Can you get me 7 bananas for the shopping trolley?

Look, that road sign tells me to go 20. That is a 2 and a 0. That says 20.

Can you get 5 plates out for dinner please?

That man has a number 3 on his footy jumper.

Daddy’s reading the newspaper; can you see the letter for your name?

Please remember, when your child is engaged in play, they are also learning. Feel confident and comfortable in your decision to enroll your child in a play-based kinder program – it is the right choice!