

# Science is Child's Play

Every child is full to bursting with interest in their world – one full of odd, often incomprehensible, but quite wonderful things. They incessantly bombard us with “why” this and “why” that, unflinchingly eat strange things (often just a bit too strange for our comfort), stick together in packs and are thoroughly satisfied when they master something new. They play in and explore the world, and they learn about it as they grow. In other words, a child's approach to life consists of questions, experiments, collaborations, solutions and gradually maturing understanding of how things work. That, in a nutshell, is Science<sup>1</sup>!

Most children approach life this way quite naturally. From an educational perspective, it makes a great deal of sense to build learning around their natural behaviours and their curiosity and interest in discovering more about their world. Doing so is an excellent way to channel and further develop their interests, skills, spirits, bodies and minds.

Science or discovery-based explorations can involve most developmental needs and are readily adaptable to everyday childcare experiences and programs. Discovery is not a product, tool, consumable or new way of doing things. It is about how we look at and play in the world. It involves the progressive well-rounded attainment of experience, knowledge and abilities. It develops a level of “scientific” literacy that includes critical thinking, problem-solving and planning; an understanding of the impact of science and technology on individuals and on society; the process and nature of rationale inquiry; knowledge of key scientific concepts and principles, and a capacity for using scientific knowledge and ways of thinking for personal and social purposes.



Discovery is easily integrated with all aspects of early childhood development, such as visual arts, dramatic play, physical skills, communication and emotional awakening. Through focused discovery-based activity we can enhance the thoroughly well-rounded learning experience that we aim to provide for our children.

When reading *The Three Little Pigs*, children can be entertained as much by the unfolding story as by discovering how the Big Bad Wolf blew two of the houses over (and how they were built in the first place). While discussing a visit to the dentist, not often a favourite topic with children, they can discover how toothpaste helps keep teeth clean. Discovery-based learning in the context of everyday occurrences, environments and education, not only enhances our approach to early childhood development, it also broadens the scope and range of topics to which children are exposed.

Learning in the early years provides the basis for the attainment of crucial skills and abilities that will impact personal, social, language, physical, emotional and cognitive development for the rest of their lives. Positive learning experiences in the early years prepare children for successful learning in elementary school or other learning situations and encourage lifelong learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Our Science includes life and physical sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The CCCF has partnered with Let's Talk Science, an educational charity that focuses on improving Science literacy, to give you the ideas (and confidence) you need to introduce Science to the children you care for.

### **Authors**

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