

Meeting the Requirements of Throughout the Day

Creating a schedule that provides children with opportunities for play throughout the day requires careful planning. While whole group activities can be meaningful experiences for preschool age children, early childhood research shows us that the most meaningful learning happens during play. That is why it is so important that child care educators intentionally set up their daily schedule and environment to offer several opportunities for children to become engaged with materials and peers.

For a schedule to meet the requirement for throughout the day at the good (5) level, the following criteria must be met:

- Children must be able to freely access the materials without any physical or verbal barriers (such as materials on high shelves, containers with lids that cannot be easily removed, or being told some areas are “closed” or “off limits”).
- Play periods must be long enough to be meaningful. In other words, children must have enough time to discover and explore materials before it is time to move on to the next part of the daily schedule. For example, children who are interested in building with blocks need enough time to develop their structures and expand their interests before it is time to clean up. How frustrating would it be to have to clean up your play area just as you were getting an exciting idea?
- **Materials should be accessible for one third of the time when most (more than 50%) of the children are present.** Offering play opportunities early in the morning and late in the evening when most children are not in attendance does not provide all children with equal opportunities to discover, create, and explore.
- For preschool programs operating six hours or more and full day school age programs, access to materials should take place for a meaningful period in both the morning and in the afternoon.
- For preschool programs that operate less than six hours, this access to materials could take place in one meaningful play period.
- In after school programs, even though children may have homework, the schedule should reflect at least one meaningful period when the majority of children have access to materials because they have been in large group, structured activities for much of the school day.



As you plan your own daily schedule to offer play opportunities throughout the day, consider these sample schedules:

Program One: A Full Day Program		Program Two: A Short Day Program		Program Three: An After School Program	
7:00	Free Play in Centers	9:00	Arrive/Free Play	2:00	Arrive, snack
8:00	Breakfast	10:15	Snack	2:30	Homework /Quiet Games
8:20	Free Play in Centers	10:45	Circle Time	3:00	Free Play in Centers
9:00	Circle Time	11:00	Outdoor Play	4:00	Outside Play
9:15	Outdoor Play/Gym	12:00	Lunch	5:00	Group Activity
9:45	Free Play in Centers	12:45	Rest	5:15	Free Play in Centers
11:00	Restroom/Lunch	1:15	Free Play in Centers	6:00	Departure
11:30	Story time/Nap Prep	2:15	Circle Time		
12:00	Nap	2:45	Outdoor Play		
2:00	Restroom/Snack	3:00	Departure		
2:30	Free Play in Centers				
3:30	Outdoor Play/Gym				
4:00	Circle Time				
4:15	Free Play in Centers				
5:00	Departure				

