

RELATIONSHIPS IN PLAY



UP FIRST: Meet Molly Wright

And listen to her TedTalk about how every child can thrive by five (and she was just seven when she gave this talk!)



Teachers:

Maria Montessori said "Play is children's work." This is a truth we value dearly at LNS. As a community, we ascribe play as essential to children's experiences. We understand it to be critical to development and well being. Play changes as children grow and develop new skills. It is a journey of meaning-making which occurs through six stages of play: unoccupied (birth - 3mos), solitary (birth - 2yrs), onlooker (~2yrs old), parallel (~2+ yrs old), associative (~3-4 yrs old), and cooperative (~4+ yrs old).

While each stage signifies a growing stage of development, the commonality is that all play takes place in the context of relationships - with materials, the child's self and with others. This understanding of the intersection of play and relationships is the cornerstone which defines high quality education at Lincoln Nursery School.

Our highly skilled teachers know where each child is in their development by observing their play. This knowledge gives them the ability to assess what move they will make as they encounter a child at play. "Should I be: scaffolding; stepping back; supporting the play with different materials; etc,?" They develop and foster relationships in this way. Ultimately, our co-teachers goals are to support children in their play in a way where each child gains agency and confidence to become active lifelong learners.





The Child's Voice:

I need to observe, move, touch things - use all my senses as I explore. At different points, I need to play by myself and have time to play with others.

The scientist/artist/engineer/etc, in me, wants to experiment and mess about and not always in a predictable way.

Playing is what I do naturally and is best for me!

I may stall out, lose interest in my play - saying "I'm bored;" or move on to play with someone or something else.

Sometimes I need to sit with my disequilibrium and figure out what to play next or I might need some support (plan, review and process) on how to play with others.

I need practice to "serve and return" with my peers so I can become a predictable play partner.

I need to be seen as my whole self, listened to, and given the opportunity to make meaning of my world through play.

When I play, I am connecting and developing relationships which help me thrive.

Play supports my growth, helping me to grow up to be curious, self-motivated, and also work well with others.



Families:

In the last two to three decades, the world has changed vastly and so has childhood. Gone are the days when we only connected directly with one another. Instead, devices now connect us to each other, school, work, etc. This can be positive in some ways, but also impact our interpersonal relationships. As Molly Wright (the 7yr old speaker from our [linked TedTalk](#)) mentioned, we are hardwired from in utero to seek human connection. It is critical to our growth and development - therefore relationships are the core of healthy development. So how can we, as families, make space and time for children to have meaningful relationships with ourselves and others? Carving out and naming "screen free" time each day can be one place to start. This can be visible by having a basket for collecting devices for periods of the day. Screen free time at dinner and bedtime can become protected time together, where attention is only on one another. Or a dedicated story time, where books are read with great animation, can be a source of undivided connection. Setting up car rides to be times of conversation or singing along to the radio together can translate to rituals that transcend into adolescence. Establishing family rituals provides a foundation for children, rooted in trust and interpersonal connection. And connection is what relationships are all about.

