



## What Do You Do?... by Melodee Simmons

Have you ever been asked, "What do you do?" You answer, "I am a preschool teacher." Then you hear, "Oh, you get to play all day," or, "Oh, you babysit."

Often people look down on early childhood educators as people who cannot do anything else, so they "babysit." If these people only knew the secret that we know!

Early childhood educators know they are creating the future leaders of our world. The teachers, lawyers, doctors, scientist, politicians, moms and dads... and the list continues. What we do every day helps to shape children's lives. These early years are when their minds and bodies are developing faster than at any other time in their lives.

The human brain is hardwired to benefit from rich experiences and interactions, particularly during the early years. At birth, a baby's brain is like a new house with a breaker box, but not all of the wiring is connected. New experiences -- talking, touching, eating, etc.-- cause these connections to occur. Repeated experiences strengthen these electrical pathways. It's during the early years that the learning pathways are established and connected in the brain. Early sensory and physical experiences -- touching, talking, reading, singing, crawling, running, jumping, playing -- wire the brain for learning and growth.

Yes, we get to play with the children. Through play, children learn sharing and cooperation. How often do adults need those skills in their daily lives? Through play, children can learn how to plan and construct a building. They act out life situations through dramatic play. They develop their creativity through arts and crafts. They develop their listening and thought processing skills during story time.

Gross motor skills are increased during time on the playground. You can look at their whole day and see how they are increasing their knowledge and physical skills. The children will use this knowledge and the skills for a lifetime.

As teachers, we have the opportunity to show children God's love and care for them through the way we talk to them and respond to their needs. Many children today are lacking the loving, secure care they need due to broken homes or parents who may be too wrapped up in their careers or relationships or other outside interests to give the children the time they need. We take the time to model God's love and to instill in them knowledge about God that will never leave them. We all know the verse, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NIV). Our goal is to give children a foundation on which to build their lives.

The next time someone says that all you do is play all day, smile and say, "Yes I do, and I wouldn't have it any other way." You know that you have one of the biggest responsibilities and privileges there can be. You help God grow a person who will love Him and be a productive, caring part of our society.

