

## GAME-BASED LEARNING

### The Benefits of Game-Based Learning for 5-6 year olds

When people generally think of "play" they think of fun and games...something simply for amusement and nothing more. However, there is a bigger, and more important, piece that is often overlooked...learning. As Kay Redfield Jamison said, "Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."

The same is true for game-based learning. When parents hear this term, they think that their children will only be "playing games" and that no learning will be involved. What a lot do not understand is that game-based learning helps children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially, all at the same time. And better yet, when information is learned in a fun way, children retain it better and want to continue to participate in the activities.

For 5 and 6-year old's, specifically, they are at a unique growth period in their life. They are refined in their gross motor skills but are still establishing a foundation in basic fundamental skills. Physically, they still lack a lot of strength. Intellectually, they have a hard time retaining information beyond three commands. Emotionally they act silly when they are nervous or excited, but their confidence is built through making role models proud. Socially, they enjoy the spotlight but tend to lack proper sportsmanship.

After years of research on the stages of child development and learning the Basic SKILLZ program was created. This program is geared towards developing the basic fundamental skills that 5 and 6-year old's are lacking. By creating a program that incorporates 4-dimensional instruction, students improve in all developmental stages, all the while, having fun! Coupled with this is a game-based approach to learning that is implemented. This method helps the students become fully engaged in learning because they are "playing a game" and having fun.

For example, one of the drills called "Taking Turns" requires that the students are partnered up. During the directions for the drill, the instructor gives the students a few steps to remember in order to complete the drill correctly. This helps this age group by giving them multiple steps to remember but in a fun way that will be easily retained. Socially, they are working with a partner and focused on good sportsmanship and teamwork. Physically the drill requires the students to perform 20 front kicks, which helps build their strength. Emotionally, by doing these things correctly, they are receiving positive feedback from the instructors which builds their confidence.

By implementing game-based learning into a holistic approach to child development, students associate learning with a strong positive emotion, which helps them retain information better. They are improving the skills necessary for their stage of the development but doing it while having fun. It's a dual process...it's fun for them but they are gaining valuable skills as well.