WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY?

A day at Kindergarten encompasses a great deal of learning which is not always obvious to parents. This delightful story has been written by Lynne Anthony, an experienced Kindergarten Director, to illustrate the learning which does take place and for which the evidence is not always obvious...

“Hello, Davy” said his mother as he came out of kindergarten. “Didn’t you do any work today?” Davy stopped, wondering what his mother meant. He had done so many things today he hardly remembered them all. Then suddenly he realised he had been so busy all morning he had quite forgotten to do the painting his mother seemed to expect each day. “No” said Davy, a little crestfallen, “I didn’t do any work today”.

Does this story sound familiar to you? It is typical of kindergartens everywhere. Let’s look at what Davy did do, that day at his kindergarten.

Davy rushed into kindergarten at 9 o’clock, very eager to show his teacher and friends the snail he had found in the garden that morning. Together they watched it and discussed what it looked like, then went together to the library shelf to find a book about snails, and to read together more information. Davy didn’t realise it, but he was learning that observation is an important part of learning and that books are a useful aid when you want information.

After putting the snail where all could look at it, Davy went to the Block Corner where he joined in the building of a large complex structure.

Davy didn’t realise it but quite unconsciously he was learning concepts about numbers, about quantity, the relationships between sizes and dimensions and measurements. And he was
becoming closely identified with the theme of the building. For a while he wasn’t Davy, he

was the building foreman, - the boss, and was experiencing the satisfying feeling of power and adequacy he associated with the grown-up world. Even when Davy helped put away the blocks he was learning co-operation, thought for others and that he was a useful, needed member of the kindergarten.

Over to the puzzle shelf now and Davy chose a puzzle he had not seen before. He spent some time working out where the pieces went, and the teacher only had to help him with one small piece. Davy didn’t realise it, but he was learning, by trial and error, to reason things out and was becoming skillful in coordinating his eye and hand – good practice for later reading and writing. When he did the puzzle a second time all by himself he experienced a great deal of satisfaction.

“You can be Daddy if you like” said Paula as Davy passed the Doll’s Corner. “O.K.” said Davy, and for a while play progressed happily with the children absorbed in playing out the experiences know in their most familiar environment, their home life.

Davy didn’t realise it, but he was learning that what he does affects others, to be sometimes a leader and sometimes a follower, and he was learning ways of working and playing happily with others.

But when Davy wanted the broom Paula was using, and then when he couldn’t have it, he marched angrily out of the Doll’s Corner. The teacher suggested he play with the clay, so Davy sat down at the clay table and pounded at the clay until gradually he calmed down and began to enjoy the feel and pliability of the clay.

Davy didn’t realise that he had found a legitimate way of “letting off steam” and getting rid of his aggressive feelings.
Later, after washing his hands, he and other children sat with the teacher at the milk and fruit table and talked about the weather and the changes in the trees in the kindergarten playground. Sometimes Davy had to wait until another child stopped speaking before he could say what he wanted to, but he enjoyed hearing what the others had to say. Davy didn’t realise it, but he was learning that speech is important, that one can learn from others, and to listen, wait and take his turn in the conversation.

Outside now, and Davy was really busy. First he climbed around the bars and wooden boards, then jumped high on the bouncing board. Davy didn’t realise it, but he was learning to control his body and to strengthen his muscles.

The water tray then caught his eye, and Davy spent some time playing with an assortment of stones, corks, sponges and other bits and pieces. It was fun watching how some things floated on top whilst other things sank to the bottom. Davy didn’t realise it, but his natural curiosity and experimenting with these objects was helping to lay the foundations for future learning.

At the carpentry table, Davy worked with intense concentration and in a very business-like way, hammering nails into soft wood with the well-balanced adult hammer. Davy didn’t realise it, but he was developing the eye-hand co-ordination so important for many skills. He was learning to plan how to put things together, and how to deal with problems which arise in construction.

There were some percussion instruments set out on a table under trees. Davy spent some time playing with each of them, listening to the sounds they made, singing to himself, and finally marching like a soldier as he beat on a drum. Davy didn’t
realise it, but he was helping develop his hearing, his listening powers and the discrimination of sounds, as well as learning to express himself.

Again he was learning by experimenting and doing.

Kindergarten always finished with the teacher reading a story to the whole group. Davy enjoyed the story – it was all about a snail, just like the one he had found that morning. Davy didn’t realise it, but as well as gaining enjoyment from the story, he was finding the beginning of a love of literature, and learning to conform in a group and listen to one person.

Sooner than he realised, it was time for Davy to go home and there were so many things he hadn’t had time to do. Tomorrow he might work at the same activities again – or he might take part in an entirely new range of activities. At either he could learn new things or reinforce the things he had learnt today.

Maybe Davy didn’t have a painting or any other tangible evidence of what he had done during his kindergarten session, but a great deal of work and learning did go on that day!