

How Play Supports Learning at TAE

1. Relational Play — Play that builds connection

This includes:

- cooperative games
- storytelling
- dramatic play
- group problem-solving
- cultural games and traditions

Relational play helps children:

- feel safe with peers and adults
- practice trust and communication
- experience belonging

This directly supports **Attachment** in the ARC model.

When children laugh, cooperate, and create stories together, they are learning how to be part of a community.

2. Regulating Play — Play that helps the body and emotions settle

This includes:

- movement play
- sensory play
- outdoor exploration
- rhythm, music, and repetition
- hands-on materials

This type of play helps students:

- release stress
- reset their nervous systems
- focus attention
- transition between tasks

This supports the **Regulation** part of ARC.

Movement, rhythm, and hands-on play help students calm their bodies and prepare their minds for learning.

3. Competency Play — Play that builds skills and confidence

This includes:

- puzzles and construction
- pretend problem-solving
- role-playing real-life situations
- creative projects
- mastery-based exploration

Through this play, children develop:

- executive function
- persistence
- language and thinking skills
- confidence in solving problems

This supports **Competency** in ARC.

When children experiment, build, and solve problems through play, they are practicing the skills they need for school and life.

Why play matters especially for trauma-impacted students

Children who have experienced stress or disruption often need:

- more repetition
- more sensory engagement
- more relationship-based learning

Play provides all three.

It creates:

- safe rehearsal spaces
- opportunities for success
- ways to rebuild trust
- chances to experience joy and agency

