Building Our Skills Inside and Out
Block play is an essential part of our curriculum both in our classrooms and our outdoor spaces.
Physically, block play allows children to develop their fine and gross motor skills.

Fingers need to work carefully to balance small objects on top of each other.

We have to really use our arms and legs to move big blocks around in the yard. Sometimes we have to ask a friend to help.
Math in Block Play

- Children learn about size, shape, length, weight, balance and spatial relationships of objects.
Math in Block Play

- Children extend their skills and gain a deeper understanding of math concepts by building towers, bridges and buildings.
Math in Block Play

- As children’s ideas and building skills grow more complex, designs and patterns emerge.
**Links to California Preschool Learning Foundations**

- **Algebra and Functions (Classification and Patterning)**
  - Children begin to sort and classify objects in their everyday environment.
  - Children expand their understanding of sorting and classifying objects in their everyday environment.

- **Measurement**
  - Children begin to compare and order objects.
  - Children expand their understanding of comparing, ordering and measuring objects.

- **Geometry**
  - Children begin to identify and use common shapes in their everyday environment.
  - Children identify and use a variety of shapes in their everyday environment.
  - Children begin to understand positions in space.
  - Children expand their understanding of positions in space.

- **Mathematical Reasoning**
  - Children use mathematical thinking to solve problems that arise in their everyday environment.
  - Children expand the use of mathematical thinking to solve problems that arise in everyday environment.
Building Blocks and Social Emotional Development

Building blocks are a way for children to engage in creating, planning and expressing their thoughts and ideas.
When children build together, play becomes an exercise in discussion, self-expression, negotiation, cooperation and sharing of experiences.
Our friend wanted to build a tall house for herself but was unable to get out and place the blocks all around her. She asked some friends playing nearby if they would help build her house. It took a little persuasion but they agreed. And when they were finished, she got the tall house that she wanted and was very happy.
Building a story...

- Our Sunshine friends had been learning about castles. Teacher Jan talked about what castles looked like, showed pictures, read books and had different castle activities throughout the week.
Outside, some Sunshine friends found building blocks and tools and decided to build a castle together. Our friends talked with each other to discuss what tools they would need and which pieces of wood they should use. They decided to build a really high castle, taller than any of them.
Our friends used hammers to pound the wood and then, working together, they stacked blocks to build a castle tower as high as they could reach.
Our friends continued to work together to create a castle they all liked.

- The photographer was politely asked to refrain from taking pictures until the castle was absolutely complete.
And in the end...

- Everyone was able to work together to build this castle. Everyone was very proud of the work they did and couldn’t wait to show this picture to Teacher Jan.
Links to California Preschool Learning Foundations: Social Emotional Development

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Social and Emotional Understanding
- Empathy and Caring
- Initiative in Learning
- Interactions with Peers
- Group Participation
- Cooperation and Responsibility
- Friendships
At the ASI Children’s Center

- We provide children with many types of building blocks for both indoor and outdoor play. These materials are used in planned activities but are also made available to children to encourage free choice in what they use and what they will create. Offering children choices in their play empowers them to make decision and gives them ownership over their creations. This in turn helps children to build not only on their math and analytical skills but also their sense of identity and self worth.
References