



## Alabama's Standards *for* Early Learning and Development

### APPENDIX ONE

# THE WONDER OF PLAY



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
Early Childhood  
Education

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### The Wonder of Play

Play is a vital part of children's development and learning. Play helps young children learn about their own abilities and interests, how to get along with others and to appreciate others' differences. Play provides opportunities for children to take on roles and act out familiar situations to give them a window on the world.

It builds children's vocabulary and encourages their creativity and curiosity. Children problem solve when they try new ways of doing things like ride a bike or put together a puzzle, and active play grows children's muscles, strength and stamina. In fact, play enables children to experience the four key ingredients for successful learning: children who are mentally active; engaged not distracted; socially interactive; and connecting to their world learn best. (Hirsh-Pasek, 2015)

*Play provides opportunities for children to take on roles and act out familiar situations to give them a window on the world.*

#### Two Types of Play

Two types of play contribute to children's engagement and learning. The first, free play, is child-directed without adult involvement and unstructured. This play is spontaneous and occurs naturally, encouraging children's curiosity and creativity. Pretend play or playground play are examples. Guided play, the second type, builds on free play through adult interaction. Adults keep children's learning goals in mind and scaffold or guide their play. Children still lead or direct the play while adults engage with them, suggesting additional materials and asking questions to encourage deeper thinking or exploration. Professionals who join children in the block corner or who make play dough shapes with them guide their play through the questions they ask. "What do you think might happen if you put that big block on the tower?" or "Mary wants to play with us, how can we find her some play dough?" When adults participate in play, children typically continue their play for longer periods of time and research indicates that academic outcomes improve when children are exposed to guided play.



## Stages of Play

Children progress through stages of social play. As early as 1932, an educational pioneer Mildred Parten identified six stages of play, beginning at birth.

Stage	What it typically looks like	Age it typically happens
<b>Unoccupied Play</b>	Babies explore materials and objects around them as they learn about the world around them.	Birth to 3 months
<b>Solitary</b>	Children play alone, typically without noticing others. They use this type of play to explore new ideas and to master basic skills.	Birth to two years
<b>Onlooker</b>	Children watch others play and may ask them questions but they do not join in. They are learning about social roles and rules through observation.	Two to three years
<b>Parallel</b>	Children play next to each other or side by side without interacting together. They are paying attention to each other but they are not engaged in social exchange.	Two and a half years to three years
<b>Associative</b>	Children show interest in what others are doing and may have the same goals for play. They ask questions and communicate with each other but their play has no set rules.	Three to four years
<b>Cooperative (or Social)</b>	Children may play in a group and follow or establish rules for play. They share ideas and toys and may even adopt goals or guidelines for their play.	Four to six years

## Many Kinds of Play

Play activities come in different forms and in different ways, each of which may have its own unique connection to children's learning. Can you recognize these kinds of play?

- Symbolic play: children use objects or actions to represent other objects
- Rough and tumble play: children engage in active play that gauges physical strength
- Socio-dramatic play: children act out experiences
- Social play: children are involved in interactive play where everyone follows rules
- Creative play: children use their imaginations and try new things
- Communication play: children use words or gestures during play such as charades or joke-telling
- Dramatic play: children are assigned roles to act out
- Locomotor play: children use movement like hide and seek, tag or races
- Deep play: children try new experiences to conquer fear, such as climbing on a play structure
- Exploratory play: children use their senses to discover things around them
- Fantasy play: children make believe; they act out things that are unlikely to happen
- Imaginative play; children use unconventional rules during play such as pretending to fly
- Mastery play; children control the physical environment like digging holes
- Object play: children use eye-hand coordination such as painting
- Role play: children explore ways of being like using a laptop or cell phone
- Recapitulative play: children explore history, stories, rhymes

*Bob Hughes: A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types, London, Playlink, UK.*

## Supportive Environments

Children's play can be supported and enhanced when the environment is purposefully designed to consider varied play experiences and where the materials and equipment promote the different types and forms of play.

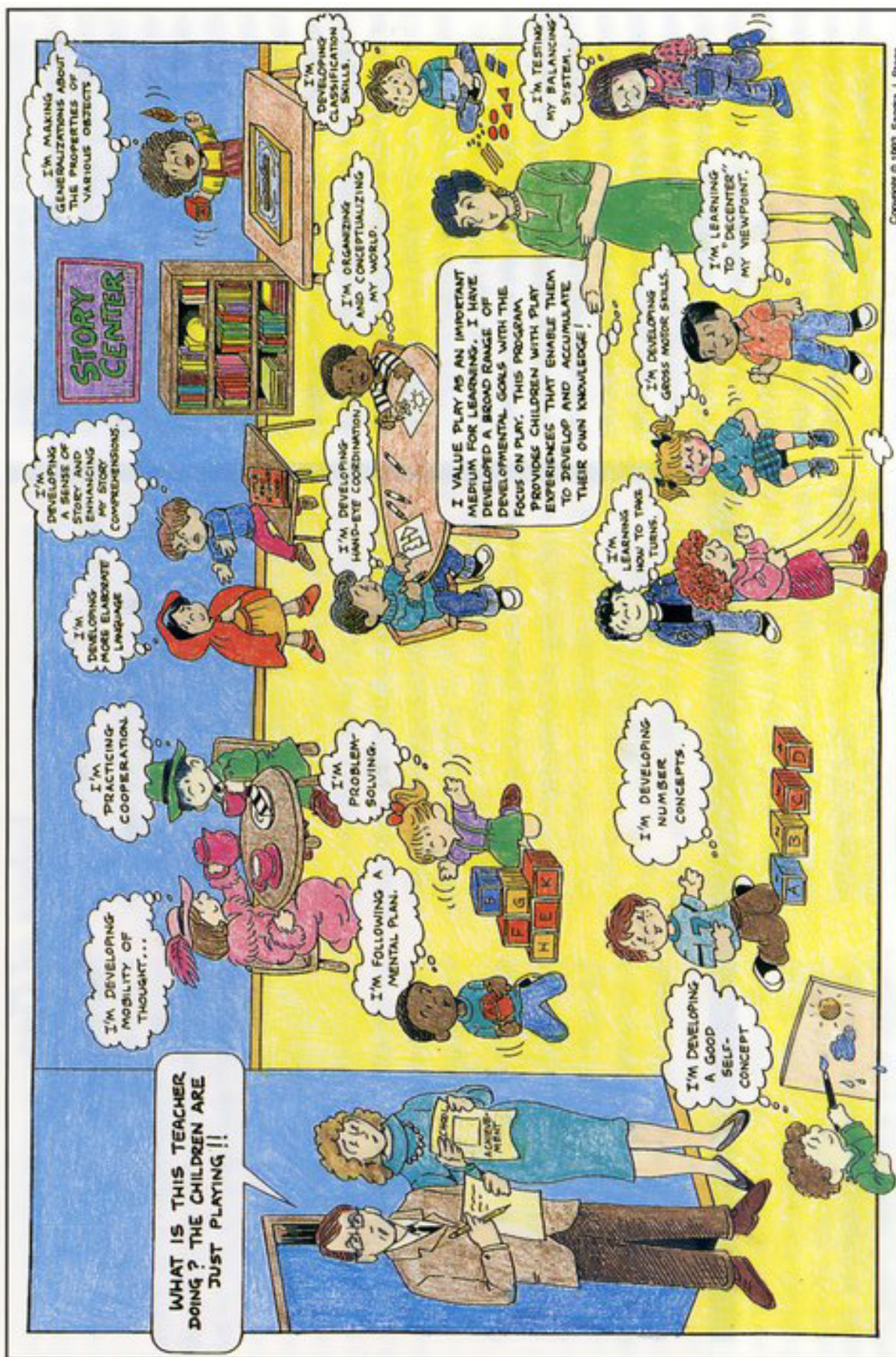
## Materials and Equipment to Support Children's Play and Learning

	Include these materials for Infants	Add these materials for Young Toddlers	Add these materials for Older Toddlers	Add these materials for Preschoolers
<b>SENSORY MATERIALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sucking toys</li> <li>• Rattles</li> <li>• Unbreakable mirrors</li> <li>• Patterned crib sheets</li> <li>• Mobiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music boxes</li> <li>• Busy boxes</li> <li>• Large bells and drums</li> <li>• Non-toxic finger paint and play dough</li> <li>• Water play with cups and spoons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sand play with household objects</li> <li>• Scarves for dancing</li> <li>• Listening games</li> <li>• Texture boards</li> <li>• Musical instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More toys for sand and water play</li> <li>• Rhythm instruments</li> <li>• Prisms</li> <li>• Feely boxes</li> </ul>
<b>ACTIVE PLAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foam climbing ramps and wedges</li> <li>• Large brightly colored balls</li> <li>• Bouncy toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crawling tunnel</li> <li>• Riding toys</li> <li>• Cardboard boxes</li> <li>• Balls</li> <li>• Push and pull toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low climber and slide</li> <li>• Wagon</li> <li>• Sandbox and toys</li> <li>• No-pedal bikes and riding toys</li> <li>• Bouncy balls</li> <li>• Mini trampoline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low balance beam</li> <li>• Low basketball hoop and balls</li> <li>• Tricycles</li> <li>• Parachute</li> <li>• Bean bags</li> <li>• Jump ropes</li> </ul>
<b>CONSTRUCTION OR BLOCK AREA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft blocks</li> <li>• Nesting toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardboard blocks</li> <li>• Stacking toys</li> <li>• Pounding bench</li> <li>• Foam blocks</li> <li>• Large duplo blocks</li> <li>• Wire mazes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wood unit blocks</li> <li>• Little people</li> <li>• Wood or plastic animals</li> <li>• Cars and trucks</li> <li>• Train and tracks</li> <li>• Toy construction tools</li> <li>• Alphabet blocks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full set of wood unit blocks</li> <li>• Wood signs and accessories for roadways</li> <li>• Small carpet with roadways</li> <li>• Woodworking bench and materials</li> <li>• Lincoln logs and tinker toys</li> <li>• Scale and weights</li> </ul>
<b>MANIPULATIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large rings</li> <li>• Squeeze toys</li> <li>• Textured balls</li> <li>• Large measuring spoons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-6 piece puzzles with knobs</li> <li>• Nesting toys</li> <li>• Large pegboards</li> <li>• Snap together toys with large pieces</li> <li>• Shape sorters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-6 piece puzzles</li> <li>• Large beads for stringing</li> <li>• Stacking toys</li> <li>• Scissors and cards for cutting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-20 piece puzzles and pegboards</li> <li>• Stringing and lacing toys and cards</li> <li>• Pattern blocks</li> <li>• Dressing boards</li> <li>• Measuring tapes and rulers</li> <li>• Sorting trays and objects</li> </ul>

	Include these materials for Infants	Add these materials for Young Toddlers	Add these materials for Older Toddlers	Add these materials for Preschoolers
<b>DRAMATIC PLAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft dolls</li> <li>• Peek-a-boo games</li> <li>• Finger plays and songs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blankets to wrap dolls</li> <li>• Dishes, pans, spoons,</li> <li>• Brooms, dust pan</li> <li>• Unbreakable mirrors</li> <li>• Shopping cart</li> <li>• Purses</li> <li>• Telephones</li> <li>• Pretend food</li> <li>• Stuffed animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doll bed and carriages</li> <li>• Doll clothes</li> <li>• Realistic dolls</li> <li>• Table and chairs</li> <li>• Toy appliances – stove, refrigerator, etc.</li> <li>• Simple dress-up clothes</li> <li>• Puppets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme-based collections of dress-ups and realistic accessories (hair salon, pet store, doctor office, etc.)</li> <li>• Dollhouse and furniture</li> </ul>
<b>READING AND LISTENING AREA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recordings of songs, voices and sounds</li> <li>• Sturdy cloth or cardboard books</li> <li>• Lap books with large pictures of faces, objects, shapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books with simple stories</li> <li>• Finger plays and songs</li> <li>• Posted pictures at eye level</li> <li>• Puppets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books with stories about familiar things</li> <li>• Flannel board and pieces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books from different genres (non-fiction, poetry, fiction)</li> </ul>
<b>WRITING AREA</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large paper</li> <li>• Fat crayons</li> <li>• Bingo markers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fat pencils</li> <li>• Different types of paper</li> <li>• Stampers</li> <li>• Feely letters</li> <li>• Magnetic letters</li> <li>• Chalkboards and chalk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colored pencils</li> <li>• Posted alphabet</li> <li>• Simple words (cat, boy)</li> <li>• Stencils</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Alphabet cards</li> <li>• Dry erase boards and markers</li> </ul>
<b>ART AREA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textured objects</li> <li>• Brightly colored toys</li> <li>• Edible finger paint (baby food)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finger paint</li> <li>• Non-toxic, washable markers</li> <li>• Chalk</li> <li>• Fat, unwrapped crayons</li> <li>• Large paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water-based paint and large brushes</li> <li>• Scissors and things to cut</li> <li>• Play dough</li> <li>• Large paper of different textures and colors</li> <li>• Stickers and paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water colors</li> <li>• Hole punchers</li> <li>• Glue, paste and thing to paste</li> <li>• Magazines to cut up</li> <li>• Crayons and markers</li> <li>• Natural materials like leaves or pine cones</li> <li>• Collage materials</li> </ul>
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play phones</li> <li>• Play cameras</li> <li>• Simple musical instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keyboard and mouse</li> <li>• Digital books to listen with adults</li> <li>• Play laptops or tablets</li> <li>• Take apart toys and materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boom boxes, CD players and head sets</li> <li>• Digital cameras</li> <li>• Laptops or tablets</li> <li>• Coding and robotics games and toys</li> </ul>

Adapted, with permission, from *Bright from the Start*, Georgia Department of Early Department of Early care and Learning





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