

Alabama's Guiding Principles for Early Learning and Development



★ **All children are unique, capable and competent learners.**

- Children progress at different rates, have individual learning styles and demonstrate diverse abilities.
- Children's learning is maximized through individualized learning experiences that recognize their unique gifts and characteristics.

★ **Children are active learners.**

- Children are naturally curious and learn through firsthand actions and explorations with objects and people in their world.
- Children construct knowledge through physical, social and mental activity.
- Children learn in the context of relationships and interactions with adults and peers.
- Play is the mechanism by which young children learn.

★ **Learning is multi-dimensional and inter-related.**

- Learning happens simultaneously across the domains of child development: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.
- No one domain is more important than another. The domains are inter-related and influenced by the growth and learning in the other domains.

★ **Successful early childhood programs establish partnerships with families.**

- Parents are children's first and primary educators.
- Parents' engagement in their children's learning at home and school creates a solid foundation for life-long learning.
- Home-program connections are critical for successful learning. Continuity of learning occurs when children's experiences build and extend across programs and home experiences.

★ **Children’s development and learning must occur in the context of their culture and home experiences.**

- Development and learning are rooted in culture.
- Traditions, language, culture, values, and beliefs are part of children’s identity and influence their thinking and learning.

★ **Children learn best in early childhood programs where adults build relationships and construct learning through positive and informed practices.**

- Early childhood professionals support children’s development and learning when they have an understanding of child development and age-appropriate practice.
- Early childhood professionals facilitate development and learning when they are intentional in the way they design and provide experiences that are built on children’s interests and motivation.
- Early childhood professionals maximize children’s learning when they utilize a cycle of observation, assessment and action through standards, curriculum and assessment tools.
- Early childhood professionals must be life-long learners who engage in ongoing, research-based training.

★ **Early childhood program environments facilitate learning experiences.**

- Children learn best in environments where they feel safe and have a sense of belonging.
- Early learning environments offer opportunities for children to explore materials, interact with peers and adults, and engage in meaningful experiences.

★ **Children develop and learn in the context of their community.**

- Early childhood programs are an extension of children’s communities.
- Collaborations and partnerships with agencies, businesses and residents within the families’ communities offer rich opportunities for learning.
- Early childhood programs support children and their families’ health and well-being with knowledge of the resources within the community.