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.