



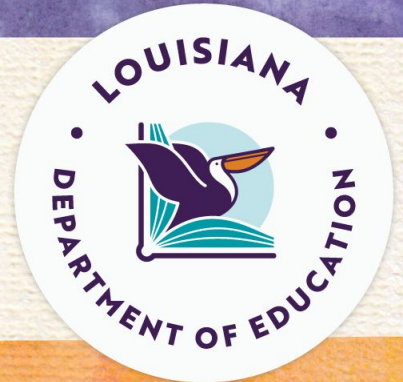
EARLY CHILDHOOD

CONFERENCE 2024

SHAPING LOUISIANA'S FUTURE



Supporting Children's Play



Purpose and Objective

Purpose: Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the importance and benefits of supporting play in the early childhood classroom.

Objective: Participants will learn

- Play encourages children to explore the environment and master new skills
- Play encourages the development of relationships in the classroom
- Play is foundational to child development
- Play, when guided, supports children's development of language and math concepts

Agenda

- I. Purpose and Objectives
- II. Agenda
- III. Activity 1: Benefits of Play
- IV. Importance of Play in Early Childhood
- V. Activity 2: - Importance of Play
- VI. Foundations of Play
- VII. Activity 3: Using Exploratory Play to Build Math Skills
- VIII. Guided Play
- IX. Closing

**“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief
from serious learning.
But for children, play is serious learning.
Play is really the work of childhood.”
*-Fred Rogers***

Activity 1 - Benefits of Play

The image features a dark blue, textured background. In the center, there is a large, light yellow rectangular area with a fine, woven texture. This yellow area is partially overlaid by three overlapping, L-shaped decorative elements on the right side. From top to bottom, these elements are colored dark purple, orange, and teal. Each element has a white outline and is positioned to create a layered, 3D effect.

Opening Activity - Benefits of Play

We know that play is important to young children.

Aside from just being fun, what are some of the other benefits?





Importance of Play in Early Childhood

Importance of Play in Early Childhood

Why is play important in early childhood?

The importance and benefits of play include

- Play supports healthy brain development
- Play is one way infants and toddlers engage in, and interact with their environment
- Play allows children to safely explore their fears and practice new things
- Play is a way that children build relationships with their peers and teachers

Importance of Play in Early Childhood - Exploration

Play supports children's exploration of the world around them. Exploration is how a child comes to know an object and then how to play with the object

For Example: Once the infant understands that shaking the rattle makes noise, they can have fun just shaking the rattle!

For Example: A toddler may be given a container to gain understanding of the concept "open" and "close". Once the toddler masters this activity, the toddler can then move to putting objects in the container and taking them out again and again.

Importance of Play in Early Childhood - Learning Through Play

Play is a way for infants and toddlers to learn and make sense of their world based on

- Manipulating and understanding the physical properties of objects
- Using and hearing new language
- Building relationships
- Using their bodies in new ways

Teachers can support children improve their experiences during play by guiding activities and adding language feedback to support what the children learn during the activity.

Importance of Play in Early Childhood - Effective Play

There are three important characteristics in effective play

- The activity should be based on the child's choices or preferences
- The activity should be flexible and adaptable
 - Young children like to do the same thing over and over
 - An infant may sit and put blocks in and out of a bucket;
 - may want a book read again 17 times; and,
 - may be happy to feed you a plastic banana over and over.
- The activity should be child-led with adults guiding the play
 - Infants and toddlers love when adults watch them play.
 - By paying close attention to their actions, teachers build shared connections and the children's self-esteem.

Importance of Play in Early Childhood - Builds Relationships

Play benefits every aspect of child development. Play provides children with the opportunity to learn about and master relationships, language, problem-solving, and their surroundings.

Most importantly, play encourages relationships through building

- Caregiver relationships
- Peer-to-peer relationship
- Interpersonal skills, such as self-regulation and self-confidence

For children who are shy, teachers may need to encourage them, help them with play ideas, and find other children to play with them.

Provide vocabulary to children with limited speech and encourage them to use gestures, pictures, or body language to communicate.

Importance of Play in Early Childhood - Teachers Are Trusted Play Partners

Loving and learning through daily play provides opportunities to encourage children's overall healthy development.

Early childhood teachers are trusted play partners for children, because teachers

- Make goodbyes easier with families
- Get their hands dirty
- Have the best activity ideas
- Teach good habits
- Have the best dance parties
- Support through challenging moments
- Encourage with smiles that light up the classroom

Activity Two - Importance of Play



Activity 2: Importance of Play

Teachers' Supporting Play

Think of some instances and share with your shoulder partner when you were able to use play to encourage building a child's learning or skill development.



Foundations of Play

Foundations of Play

Young children play to learn and play will change for the child as they develop and grow.

- The first year of life typically involves sensory play.
- The second year of life often involves pretend play with toys and parallel play with other children.
- By the third year of life, play expands to their social and motor skills. Play at this time should often include turn-taking and cooperative play.
- From three years to five years of life, play becomes complex as children coordinate their physical actions, imaginations, and rules in coordinated community play with others.

Foundations of Play - Examples of Play From Birth to 9 Months

For the youngest children, play begins with exploration.

Exploratory play begins with classroom interactions, first with the caregiver, and then with other children, which leads to learning to play with others.

Examples of birth to 9 months include

- Imitates facial expressions and sounds heard
- Babbles with expression
- Smiles, coos in response or, to engage caregiver
- Takes turns while making sounds
- Plays peek-a-boo

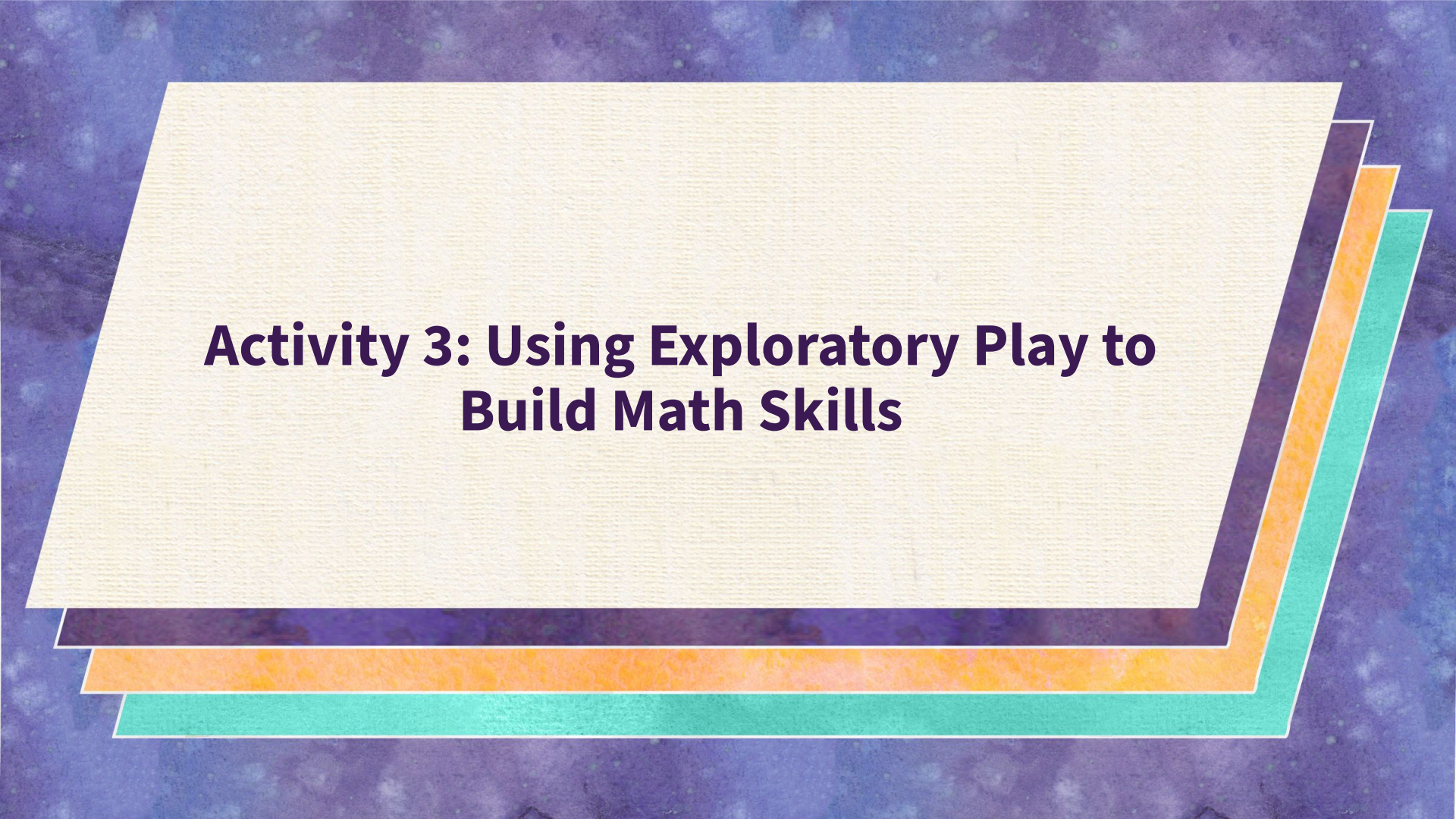
Foundations of Play - Examples of Play From 8 to 36 Months

Examples of explorative play from 8 to 18 months include

- Imitates sounds or actions to get attention
- Hands toys to others to engage in play, plays games such as pat-a-cake

Examples of explorative play from 18 to 36 months include

- Imitates others, especially adults and older children (e.g., pretend reading)
- Plays mainly beside other children, but begins to include other children
- Plays simple pretend games (e.g., acting out animal characteristics), and takes turns in games
- Engages in simple role play to practice or understand familiar routines (e.g., carries a bag on arm and waves goodbye, puts blankets on babies and pats their back)
- Uses toys to symbolize pretend objects (e.g., uses a block for a phone)



Activity 3: Using Exploratory Play to Build Math Skills

Using Play To Build Math Skills

This activity show a teacher using conversations with young children to introduce early math concepts (e.g. shapes, colors, counting)

Sorting - Birth to 9 Months

How can the teacher expand on this new learning through the day?



Guided Play

Importance of Guided Play - Building Relationships

As an early childhood educator, you are the child's very first and favorite playmate. From the beginning of an infant's life, they are playing with you, whether they are watching your face as you feed them or listening to your voice as you sing to them during diaper change. The infant is at work, learning and exploring and you are their guide.



Guided Play - Instruction

Guided play can be called instruction in the early childhood classroom because

- Helps children develop proactive control
 - A child's ability to use clues from their environment to determine what might happen next
- Allows teachers to use the joy children experience during play to further engage them to reinforce important skills.

Guided play is the difference in what a child can do alone and what a child can do with the teacher's support.

Guided Play - Understanding Concepts Through Mastery Play

Play supports young children's understanding of concepts through mastery play.

- **Mastery play** is when play is used to practice or master skills or ideas.

For example: At 8 to 10 months, babies may begin to show signs of separation anxiety. A baby who is usually very happy coming to your classroom may suddenly not want to leave their parent's arms at drop-off time and exhibit stress.

- This is because the child has begun to master the concept of object permanence - a person or object continues to exist even when it can no longer be seen.
- The caregiver can support the child by simply playing the fun game of peek-a-boo, which gives the child a chance to practice and test out the understanding of object permanence.

Guided Play - Problem Solving



Playtime is special and is critical to children's development

- Playtime is their “work” and their way of learning about the world around them
- Playing it again, and again, and again
 - Young children master skills by practicing
 - Young children feel accomplished and successful when they can do it “all by myself”

Guided Play - Support Early Math Learning



Math is everywhere in the early childhood classroom.

Use math talk as you describe what children see and do, such as

- "You have two eyes, and so does your bear. Let's count: 1, 2."
- "I have more crackers than you do. See, I have three and you have two. I'm going to eat one of mine. Now I have the same as you!"
- "That's the third time I've heard you say 'Mama.' You've said 'Mama' three times!"

Guided Play - Language Development

During play, children's brains are ready to respond to language.

- Teachers can help children by making sure they have plenty of rich language experiences to support their learning. Talk, talk, and talk.
- An excellent way to support language development is reading. Even very young babies benefits from being read to.





Closing

Closing

- As the expert in the classroom, the teacher provides opportunities for children to have **exploratory play** several times a day that leads to skill mastery.
- Play is important for **building relationships** and positive peer-to-peer relationships and reduces negative or challenging behaviors.
- Play is how learning evolves into **higher levels of mastery** such as language and early literacy skills, math concepts, and problem-solving skills.

Introduction



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Early Childhood Strategy

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