

# Play: Is It Just for Fun or Am I Learning?

The Early Years: Building Blocks for a Successful Future Conference



State Personnel Development Grant  
(Grant No. H323AO50005)

# REACH MS

## Realizing Excellence for ALL Children in Mississippi

- Mississippi's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)
- Awarded to the Mississippi Department of Education in 2005, refunded in 2010 and 2016.
- Operated by the University of Southern Mississippi's School of Education.
- Two areas of focus:

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

- K-3 Classrooms

### **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

- Tier I, II, & III in K12 Schools
- Student-specific for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD)
- Early Childhood Settings
- Facility-wide in
  - Juvenile Detention Centers
  - Therapeutic Group Homes

# REACH MS GOALS (2016-2021)

**Goal 1:** Increase the academic performance in English/Language Arts of Pre-K – 3 students with disabilities through implementation of Universal Design for Learning.

**Goal 2:** Support development and expansion of positive learning environments in Mississippi through effective implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports within a MTSS Framework.

# What is Play?

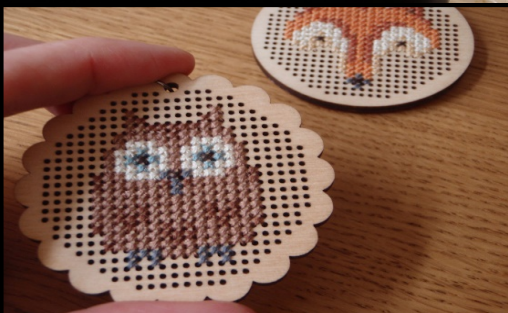
Miriam Webster's definition:  
to engage in sport or recreation



What ways would you define play for  
yourself?

# Play for Adults

- Hobbies
- Sports
- Time with friends
- Things that are relaxing





# Play for Young Children


- Toys
- Outside
- Time with friends
- Things that are relaxing



# Plays on Play

- Play-Doh
- Playground
- Play
- Play It Again Sports





*Scientists have recently determined that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain – unless it is done with PLAY, in which case, it takes between 10-20 repetitions.*

*- Dr. Karyn Purvis' research*



# Purposeful Play – Where?

## At School/Child Care

- Learning Centers
- Playground
- PE
- Hands-on planned activities



## At Home/Community

- Bedroom
- Living room/Playroom
- Outside
- Park
- Anywhere.....



# Developmental Areas Used in Play

- Communication/language
- Social emotional skills
- Cognitive skills
- Motor skills

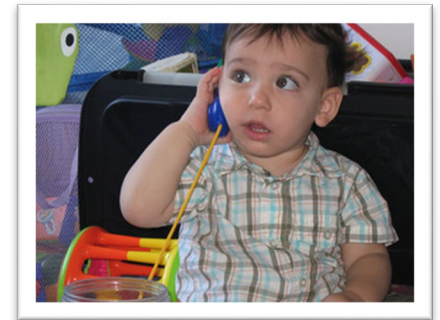


Why these?

Play is hands-on with items and typically requires interactions.

# Communicating During Play

- Engage in cycles of communication, also called serve and return.
- Use the form of communication the child uses to label items, people, processes, etc. and expand on this communication.
- Pair other forms of communication with words.
- Wait....give the child time to respond.
- “Require” communication or an attempt.



<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>

# Utilizing Social Emotional Skills

- Practice social skills during interactions of play.
  - Turn taking
  - Sharing
  - Using nice words
  - Helping
- Read/view specific social stories for difficult play situations.
- Practice emotional literacy during play.
  - Identify emotions
  - Relate to others' emotions
  - Self-regulate
- Use visuals to help the child manage feelings and self-regulate.
- Begin to solve problems with visuals.



# Building Cognition

- Extend the child's play with interactions that take his/her ideas and current play and further them (i.e., scaffolding).
  - Add in a new item.
  - Ask a question.
  - Use different vocabulary.
- Provide opportunities for the child to make choices.
- Encourage the child to finish tasks and activities.
- Encourage the child to play with different children/people, in different settings, and with different materials.





# Motor Play

- Outside is a good place for big muscle motor skills.
- Assist children in learning how to use outside equipment on the playground, at home, and/or at the park.
- Use stairs, balls, riding toys, etc. to practice skills.
- Manipulatives are great for small muscle motor skills.
  - Play-Doh
  - Puzzles
  - Toys with pieces that “move” – push, pull, turn, open, shut, slide, stack, connect, roll, etc.

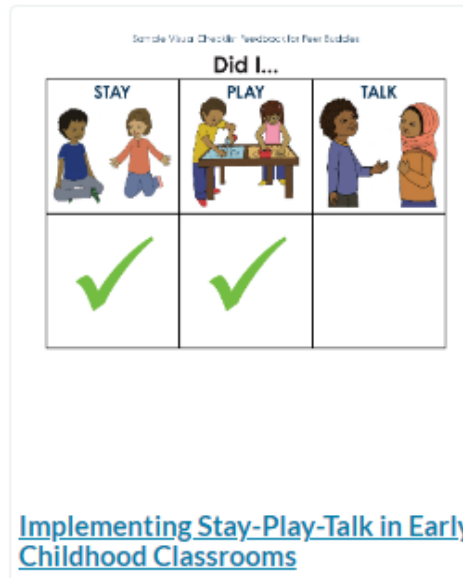


# Resources



Peer Mediated Social Skills and Visual Supports

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Peer-Mediated-Skills.pdf>



Implementing Stay-Play-Talk in Early Childhood Classrooms

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Stay-Play-Talk.pdf>



Help Us Calm Down: Strategies for Children

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Calm-Down Poster EN.pdf>

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