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GELS Activity Guide for Parents

Introduction

This **Activity Guide for Parents*** is written to go hand-in-hand with the Georgia Early Learning Standards** (GELS) for children from birth through age three. It includes activities to do in the home. The activities are designed to make the standards “come alive” in practical ways. There is also an **Activity Guide for Teachers***** with activities to do in classrooms and family child care settings.

A panel of center-based and family child care teachers, parents, and early childhood specialists completed in-depth reviews of the Activity Guides. They suggested revisions, contributed activities, and offered numerous valuable comments to improve the finished product. Additionally, the broader early childhood community had the opportunity to comment on the format and content of the Guides at a series of Feedback Forums.

The **Guide for Parents** is organized by age groups, with activities for Infants, One Year Olds, Two Year Olds, and Three Year Olds. Each age group contains activities in the five areas of development covered in the GELS – Physical, Emotional & Social, Approaches to Learning, Language & Literacy, and Cognitive. Where possible and practical, the activities in the Guide for **Parents** “match” those in the **Guide for Teachers** to encourage continuity between home and school.

The goals of the Activity Guide are to offer parents:

- a quick reference to the standards, indicators of each skill, and sample child behaviors included in the GELS
- examples of activities and strategies that link with each standard
- specific “tips” for children with special needs and for language and cultural inclusion
- general “tips” with developmental information and others suggestions relating to each standard

Activities and Strategies

It is important to describe what the activities *are* and what they are *not*. The activities are

- linked directly to the standards, indicators, and sample behaviors in the Georgia Early Learning Standards
- examples of the kinds of activities parents and teachers can do to help children make progress toward the standards
- examples of the kinds of activities parents and teachers should look for in other resources
- designed to assure parents and teachers that they are on the right track if they do similar activities at home and in school
- compatible with developmentally appropriate curricula

**Throughout the Activity Guides, the term “parent” refers to adults, most commonly family members, who are the primary caregivers of children in their home. This includes, mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, stepparents, aunts, uncles, nannies, babysitters, and others who care for the child in the home on a regular basis.*

***The full Georgia Early Learning Standards document can be found in the Child Care Services Section of the Bright from the Start website at www.decal.state.ga.us. Copies can also be requested by calling 404-656-5957.*

****The term “teacher” refers to adults who work directly with children in group settings. This includes classroom teachers and teaching assistants, paraprofessionals, caregivers, family child care providers, home based teachers, and others who have direct contact with children in groups on a regular basis.*

- based on high quality curriculum materials, activity books, classroom and home observations, and years of teaching experience
- designed to support positive approaches to learning
- designed to be simple enough to implement without training
- designed to be used with readily available inexpensive materials and books

The activities are *not*

- a curriculum
- an assessment tool
- a complete set of activities for any developmental area
- sufficient as the only resource for quality learning experiences for any age group

The Activity Guides are a useful starting place for providing learning activities that match the Georgia Early Learning Standards. Parents are strongly encouraged to find other high quality resources with activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Format

Below is a sample of the format used throughout the Activity Guide. The example is part of the Physical Development section for three year olds. Each component, a–f, will be explained at the bottom of page vii.

(a) Gross motor skills

Three-year-olds . . .

(b) **Control body movements** as they:

- #### (c)
- Lift and carry
 - Climb on low outdoor equipment
 - Jump down
 - Hop
 - Go upstairs and downstairs
 - Pedal a tricycle

Demonstrate coordination and balance as they:

- Walk on a low balance beam
- Jump forward from a standing position
- Move around without bumping into things
- Kick
- Throw
- Catch

Express creativity through movement as they:

- Make creative body movements freely
- Dance

Activities and Strategies for Development

(d)

Jumping Hula Hoops

- Place a hula hoop on the ground in a large open area indoors or outdoors. (Make a big circle with a long rope if you do not have a hula-hoop!)
- Play music as your child walks around the outside edge of the hula-hoop.
- When you stop the music, tell your child to jump inside the hula-hoop.
- When the music starts, your child can jump back out and walk around again.

(e)

Special Needs Tip

Use a hand signal when you start and stop the music for a child who is hearing impaired.

(f)

Remember that three year olds need to move!

Invite your child to act out some parts of a story when you are reading together.

If you are waiting in a restaurant and your child is restless, take a walk outside for a few minutes or bring a table activity for your child to do.

Do a quiet activity before nap or bedtime. You can listen to quiet music or read a book together.



Here is an explanation of the format.

(a) The large words in bold at the beginning of each major section, such as **Gross motor skills**, represent one of the Georgia Early Learning Standards written in abbreviated form. (The full standard says “The child will begin to develop gross motor skills.”)

(b) The words inside the tabs, such as **Control body movements**, represent one of the Indicators, which is a component of gross motor skills.

(c) The bulleted entries under each Indicator are a list of skills that represent ways children could demonstrate that they “control body movements.” These skills correspond to the “Sample Behaviors” included in the GELS.

(d) Activities and strategies follow that are designed to help children develop skills in the particular standard. The steps of the activities are indicated with large bullets.

(e) “Tips” for including children with special needs, children whose home language is other than English, and children with a variety of cultural backgrounds, are found throughout the activities.

(f) “Parent Tips” are included at the end of each set of activities. They cover developmental information and other suggestions for each standard.

Learning Tips

Throughout the Activity Guide, you will find different kinds of “tips.” There are *Special Needs Tips* to suggest ways to adapt activities for children with developmental delays, vision and hearing impairments, large and small muscle difficulties, and other challenges. Many children with special needs will be able to participate in the activities with modifications such as those suggested in the *Special Needs Tips*. Parents who need additional resources can contact *Parent to Parent, Inc.* for information about *Babies Can't Wait* locations throughout the state of Georgia. Their phone number is 1-800-229-2038 or 770-451-5484 in metro Atlanta. You can also refer to their website at <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw/>.

Language and Cultural Tips are included to suggest ways to honor the home languages and cultures of children and families. Additionally, a set of *Tips about Bilingual Development* is included in the Language and Literacy section.

Parent Tips appear at the end of each set of activities. These are bits of developmental information and other strategies that support the skills covered in each standard. The *Parent Tips* are ideas about how to make learning a regular part of children's play time. Parents are their child's first, and most important, teacher!

Using the GELS Activity Guide for Parents

Children learn while they play. The **GELS Activity Guide for Parents** is designed to make your child's play time more meaningful. It is written to help you find ways to have fun with your child as you learn and play together.

The Guide divides activities into age groups to make it convenient to use and to be consistent with the Georgia Early Learning Standards. However, it is important to view the infant-toddler period as an age *range*, not as a series of rigid blocks of time. Remember that children develop at different rates. In addition, each child develops skills in some areas before others. For example, a two year old may be working on “two year old skills” in most areas but may be ready to work on a few “three year old skills.” The child might still be working on some “one year old skills” as well. This is to be expected. The important thing is that your child makes progress throughout this age range. It is not critical exactly when certain skills are achieved.

To begin using the Guide, turn to the section that matches your child's age. As you read the activities, you may notice that you are already doing activities similar to some of them. You can feel confident that you are helping your child develop skills in those areas. Look for other activities that you and your child would enjoy. Try to find them in each of the developmental areas – Physical, Emotional & Social, Approaches to Learning, Language & Literacy, and Cognitive.

Also, look through other age group sections of the **Activity Guide for Parents** for activities that would benefit your child. As mentioned above, it is likely that your child is developing skills in different age sections in the Guide.

Children who approach learning in a positive way are likely to be more successful learners. As you go through the process of selecting activities, feel free to adjust the materials and procedures based on your child's interest and abilities. Choose activities that build on your child's natural curiosity and inclination to explore. You know your child best. The activities are designed to be a “starting place” for you. Use your own creativity to make them even better!

In addition, use your best judgment to assure your child's safety. Choose toys and materials that are in good repair, are age-appropriate, and do not present a safety or health hazard. *Supervise all activities carefully.*

Before conducting an activity, read all the steps to see if you have the materials on hand or if you need to gather them. Decide when and how you will get the materials and when you plan to do the activity. After conducting an activity, think about how it went. What did your child learn from the activity? Will you repeat the activity at another time? If so, will you repeat it exactly the same way or will you change the activity to make it even more interesting or challenging for your child?

Share the Activity Guide with babysitters and other adults who care for your child in your absence. Show them some of your child's favorite activities so they can do them together. Suggest that they try other learning activities from the Guide too.

Most of all use this Activity Guide to bring fresh learning ideas into your home. Always begin by looking at what your child *can do* and build from there. Childhood is a time to celebrate the energy, playfulness, and special abilities of each individual. Enjoy your child . . . and yourself!