

The Quality Connection

Issue 4



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Beyond the Rule

A Path to Quality Care

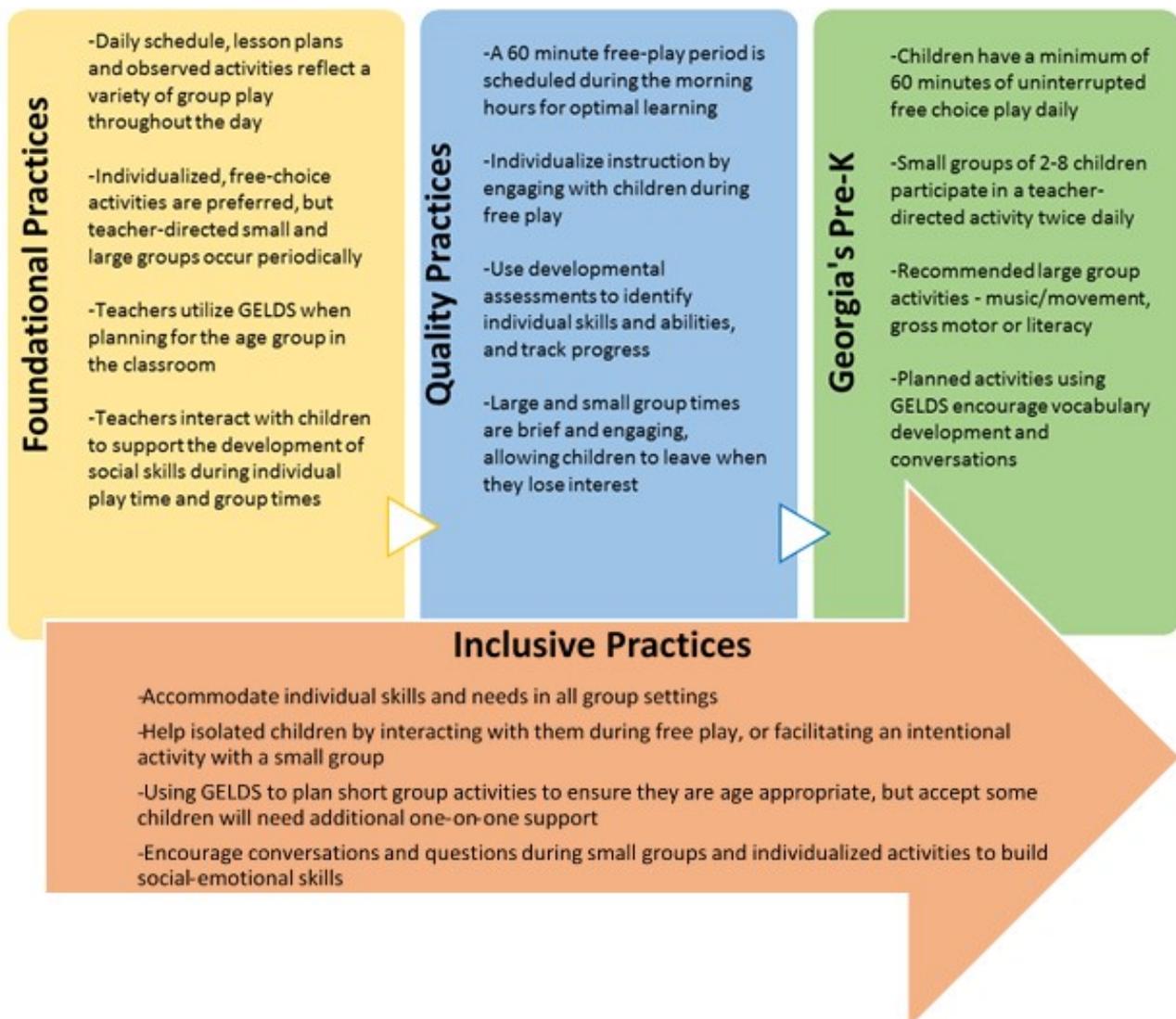


**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Each issue of *The Quality Connection* will focus on one classroom component and will identify connections between requirements and expectations of DECAL's various divisions and what impact each one has on classroom practices around the specific component. *The Quality Connection* will illustrate how all DECAL programs are part of a quality continuum and are designed to work together towards continuous quality improvement.

This issue will focus on the importance of **group play activities**.

The following chart shows the progression of fundamental practices found in Child Care Licensing rules, to practices utilized in Quality Rated and preschool-specific practices found in Georgia's Pre-K. Strategies for Inclusion and Behavior Support should be embedded throughout all levels of quality practices.





Group play - facts to remember

Group play refers to the number of children engaged in an activity, and generally means a small number of peers (small group), or all children in the classroom engage in the same activity at the same time (large group). During all group times, offer engaging activities easily experienced by all children, and avoid periods where children sit passively listening with nothing to do. Provide additional one-on-one support to help some children participate. In general, teacher-directed group play is not appropriate for young children (infants, toddlers, and young twos). Infants should always have individualized care and play opportunities. Small groups may naturally occur with toddlers and twos, but children this age don't have the social-emotional skills to address some of the challenges of "sharing" toys, or the physical development to adequately control their own bodies, so teachers need to provide ample support and remain close to the activity. Children should be permitted to leave a group and explore other materials when group activities are no longer engaging.

Whether children are engaged in individual, small or large group activities, teachers play an important role by interacting with children to introduce language, support the development of new skills, and encourage social-emotional skills.

How does **group play connect to child development and the classroom environment?**

Infants

All activities should be individualized

- An infant plays with an activity gym on the floor while the teacher sits nearby talking to the child
- Teachers name objects hanging from a mobile as they change diapers
- Older infants play with toys side-by-side while teachers monitor them pointing out facial expressions and making sure each child has an engaging toy

Toddlers & 2's

Most activities should be individualized

- One teacher interacts with a few children reading books, while another teacher supports other children building simple towers with blocks
- A teacher encourages two children playing with puppets to talk to one another
- Teachers lead two-year-old children in a parade marching around the room with musical instruments and permit those who are not interested to play in other learning centers

Preschool 3's & 4's

Group activities should be limited

- Teachers rotate during free play and interact with children using unit blocks, introducing concepts of size and shape as children build structures
- A teacher supports 3-4 children playing with puzzles, including children with varying physical abilities by providing puzzles with knobs
- A teacher reads a big book with easy-to-see pictures during circle time, and another teacher sits with the children to support those who may struggle to pay attention

School Age

Group activities should be self-chosen

- Some children explore art materials, while others read books or play with small building materials
- Small groups of children play board games or use craft materials to create bracelets
- Children decide to write and act out a play for other children in the classroom

Individual Space

- Child or teacher created space that allows children to withdraw for alone time or quiet play, and allows constant adult supervision
- Ex. child plays in area with pillows, stuffed animals, paper, coloring materials, books, etc.

Small Group Space

- Child or teacher created space that allows for a variety of small group interactions, learning opportunities and individual instruction
- Ex. small group of children playing together on a rug with blocks or a small group of children working at a table on a teacher-directed activity

Large Group Space

- Child or teacher created space that safely allows for an inclusive large group learning experience
- Ex. children gather on large carpet or area for circle time, music and movement or literacy activity



Additional information and resources

- Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning/Quality Rated <http://qualityrated.org/>
- CAPS Quality Rated Deadline: <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/CAPSQualityRatedDeadline>
- For Provider assistance/inquiries regarding children's behavior, please contact the Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialist Helpline at: 1-833-354-4357 or email inclusion@decal.ga.gov