

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE PLAY FOR ALL PRESCHOOLERS

Participant Guide and Resource List

This participant guide provides ideas for creating learning environments for all preschool-aged children. The reflection questions and activities will help you think about ways to support children's learning. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

Play Supports Learning

ELOF and Play



Play Supports Learning Across Domains

Play is an important part of childhood that helps children learn and grow.

Children explore more and remember what they learned during play longer than what they learn from direct instruction.

Play boosts creativity, helps build relationships, and supports physical and mental health.

Play enhances curiosity, which facilitates memory and learning. It can also help children manage stress.

Play promotes school readiness skills: Benefits of play include gains in cognition, physical development, social emotional development, and language skills- which are foundational assets for school readiness.

Reflection: Inclusive Play

What does inclusive play mean to you? What does it look like or feel like?



Play that Is Culturally Sustaining



Cultural Variations in Play

Depending on children's social and cultural background, play varies between amount of adult involvement, individualistic or collective oriented play, or object based or people-centered play

Educator biases can reinforce harmful play patterns such as pushing Black boys towards active play, or not providing children with disabilities autonomy in their choice of play. Every child should have the opportunity to direct their play preferences.

Ensure that your educational setting reflects the interests and cultural backgrounds of your children; like the foods they eat at home or activities that are relevant to them and their families.

Culturally sustaining practices is a commitment to equity. It's important to get to know your children and families individually. Observe children's play, investigate your internal biases related to their play, and make time to discuss observations and changes with your colleagues. Ask children open ended questions to learn more about their play!

Try it Out!

Think of a child in your program that you would like to provide with a more culturally sustaining experience.

What is one question you would like to ask their family?

What type of addition would you like to add? (experience, song, objects, etc.)

Play that Is Accessible



Access to Play Is Key

Physical Accessibility: Ensure children can access materials independently, walkways are clear, and there is ample space for activities. Are there areas for active play and areas for calm?

Social Accessibility: Children thrive in warm, caring relationships with peers and adult educators. Educators can model caring invitations to play or structure small group play that supports the development of dual language learners and children with disabilities.

Cognitive Accessibility: Ensure that your educational setting reflects the interests and cultural backgrounds of your children; like the foods they eat at home or activities that are relevant to them and their families.



Supporting Risky Play

- **Risk taking** in play is fundamental to children's development. Experimenting with rough and tumble play, speed, and heights benefits their experience in autonomy, resilience, social-emotional regulation, physical development, and communication skills.

Children with disabilities have less access to risky play even though it is beneficial. **Adult biases and assumptions about disability and risky play are the biggest barriers to risky play for children with disabilities.**

Promoting risky play: Investigate your own biases. Share the benefits of risky play with parents. Add in loose parts play. Create individualized opportunities for risky play for children with disabilities using the coordinated approach with disability coordinators, families, and other professionals.

Reflection: Risky Play

Choose a type of risky play you would like to support more in your program.

Risky play types: Playing with speed, heights, messy play, rough and tumble play, risky tools (rope, hammer, etc.).

What are some small ways you can integrate or support that type of risky play?

Play that Is Meaningful



Motivation to Play

When is play meaningful? Play is meaningful when children are excited and engaged, children are motivated, play reflects their interests, and/or they continue to talk about it after play is over.

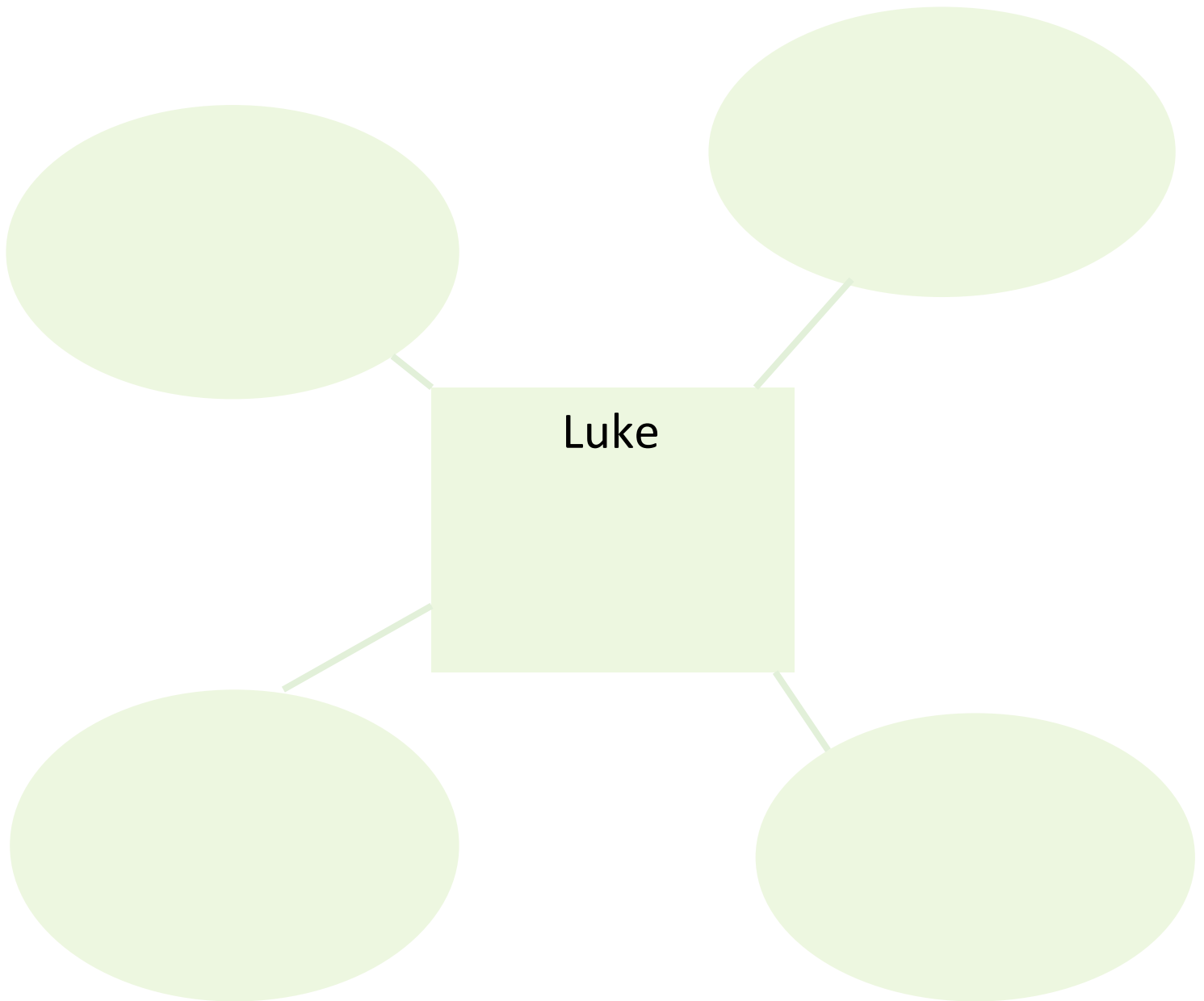
Supporting meaningful play: Provide diverse and inviting play materials, encourage choice making, and expand on the interests of children through additional props or guided questions.

Observation: Using different tools to observe children's play, like photos or videos, is a useful way to gain insight into play motivations. Creating time to talk with your colleagues can provide you with new perspectives.

Talk with children: Facilitating a conversation directly with children about their play can give you information about what is meaningful and motivating to them about their play. When children recall their play experience and talk through their thinking, it supports their cognitive and language development, in addition to them feeling seen and valued for their play.

Try it Out!

Video Observation and Planning Web



Helpful Resources

Online Resources

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework>

Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/supporting-school-readiness-success-young-african-american-boys/supporting-school-readiness-success-young-african-american-boys>

Socialization Environments in Head Start and Early Head Start Home-Based Programs

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/socialization-environments-head-start-early-head-start-home-based-programs>

Play Space Assessment for Preschool

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/play-space-assessment-preschool>

Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/equity-inclusiveness-cultural-linguistic-responsiveness>

Making It Work: Implementing Cultural Learning Experiences in American Indian and Alaska Native Early Learning Settings for Children Ages Birth to Five

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/making-it-work-implementing-cultural-learning-experiences-american-indian-alaska-native-early>

- Cultural Learning Experiences in Tribal Early Learning Settings – Alaska High Kick Video
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/cultural-learning-experiences-tribal-early-learning-settings>

Head Start Center for Inclusion

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/head-start-center-inclusion>

Preschool Inclusion Guide

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/inclusion-children-disabilities-training-guide/preschool-inclusion-guide>

Supporting Children with Disabilities or Suspected Delays

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/supporting-children-disabilities-or-suspected-delays>

Visual Supports

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/visual-supports>

Social Stories

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/social-stories>

Webinars

Playing to Learn: Benefits of Play in Early Childhood

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/playing-learn-benefits-play-early-childhood>

Front Porch Series: Growing Physical Skills Through Outdoor Learning and Play (includes discussions with Jennifer Fung on inclusive play and Mike Brown on risky play)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/growing-physical-skills-through-outdoor-learning-play>

Teacher Time Series: Preschool Inclusion and Belonging

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/teacher-time-series/preschool-inclusion-belonging>

Supporting Social and Emotional Learning for Children with Disabilities

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/supporting-social-emotional-learning-children-disabilities>

Environments that Support High Quality Inclusion

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/environments-support-high-quality-inclusion>

Coordinated Approaches: Serving Children with Disabilities

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/coordinated-approaches-serving-children-disabilities>

Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/culturally-responsive-parent-engagement>

Mobile Apps

ELOF2GO Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elof2go-mobile-app>

Ready DLL Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/ready-dll-mobile-app>

Inclusion Lab App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/inclusion-lab-app>