

Activity Guide

for Teachers



Georgia Early Learning Standards



Birth Through Age 3



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GELS Activity Guide for Teachers

Introduction

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

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 Teachers** 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 Teachers** “match” those in the **Guide for Parents** to encourage continuity between school and home.

The goals of the Activity Guide are to offer teachers

- a quick reference to the standards, indicators, 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 teaching suggestions for 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 teachers and parents can do to help children make progress toward the standards
- examples of the kinds of activities teachers and parents 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 “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.

** 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 “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.

- 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. Teachers and parents are strongly encouraged to find other high quality resources to develop a complete educational program 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)

A Trip through the Forest

- Put tape on the floor for children to walk on.
- Set up a table to crawl under.
- Arrange four small chairs, back to back, to walk or crawl around.
- Get a low stool so children can step up and jump down.
- Set out a large box, open at both ends, that children can crawl through.
- Use the objects to create an imaginary place such as a forest. For example, pretend the tape is a vine, the table is a bridge, the chairs are trees, the stool is a big stump, and the box is a tunnel.
- This would be a good follow-up activity after reading or telling a story that takes place in the woods, such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* or *Little Red Riding Hood*.

(e)

Special Needs Tip

Help a child who is unable to walk participate by holding onto his hands or allowing him to crawl.

(f)



Build movement into your activities whenever you can:

Invite children to stand up and act out some parts of a familiar story.

Allow children to choose to stand up while doing table activities.

Encourage children to move creatively from one activity to the next. For example, they can “float like a butterfly to the playground,” or “hop like a rabbit to the rug to hear a story.”

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) “Teacher Tips” are included at the end of each set of activities. They cover developmental information and teaching 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 include children with developmental delays, vision and hearing impairments, large and small muscle difficulties, and other challenges. All young children benefit when those with special needs participate in classrooms with children their same age. The *Special Needs Tips* are suggestions for making this a successful experience.

Teachers can get additional help through their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency. You can locate your local R&R online at www.gaccrra.org or by calling 1-800-466-5681. For further information and resources, call Bright from the Start at 1-888-442-7735 or 404-656-5957 in metro Atlanta. You can access their resources online at www.decal.ga.us and click on “Special Needs” under “Families.”

Language and Cultural Tips are included to suggest ways to honor the home languages and cultures of the children we teach. Children’s educational experiences are better when teachers and parents work closely together. It is in each child’s best interest for communication to flow smoothly between home and school. The *Language and Cultural Tips* are ways to build bridges between the two. Additionally, a set of *Tips about Bilingual Development* is included in the Language & Literacy section.

Teacher Tips appear at the end of each set of activities. These are bits of developmental information and teaching strategies that support the skills covered in each standard. The *Teacher Tips* provide teachers with ideas about how to make their classrooms vibrant learning environments for young children.

Using the Activity Guide for Teachers

Think about the children in your care, and review your educational program. Read the age group section of the **Activity Guide for Teachers** that applies to the majority of the children you teach. Look at the tabs and bullets at the beginning of each section to see which standards and skills you are already covering in your daily learning experiences. Make note of areas you feel are missing from your plans and skills you would like to work on more. This exercise will help you see whether you are offering a good variety of learning experiences across the developmental areas. Read the tips throughout each section for more ideas about creating a well-rounded learning program.

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 experience with the children in your class. Base your selections on the children’s interests to increase their level of engagement. Choose activities that build on their natural curiosity and inclination to explore. You know your children 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 as well as your knowledge of Georgia licensing standards to assure children’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.*

Once you have identified standards and skills to work on, choose activities from those sections of the Activity Guide. Then check your daily schedule and plan how you will incorporate them. Begin by including one or two new activities the first week and more thereafter. Your goal is to offer activities in all five developmental areas each day.

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. Will you repeat the activity at another time? What did *you* learn about each child’s development during the activity? Do you need to make any changes to adapt the activity for a particular child or group of children?

Remember that children develop at different rates. It is likely that you have children in your class with skills on several different levels. If you are teaching a “one year old” class, for example, you may have children who are ready to work on some two year old skills and others who are still working on some at the infant level. Become familiar with the activities in these sections of the Activity Guide too. As much as possible, you want to adapt your teaching to the children rather than expecting the children to adapt to your teaching. This Activity Guide is designed to help you do that.

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