

Grade Level
Early Learners



FUNDAMENTALS OF PLAY

A Teacher's Role in Play



READY TO RUN PD

THIS SESSION WAS WRITTEN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH...



New Teacher Center is a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving student learning by guiding a new generation of educators. We have made it our mission to overcome challenges teachers and students face by providing all educators with the support and resources necessary to succeed from their first day to their last.

When we focus on teachers, students succeed. NTC understands that providing educators at all levels with the foundation and supporting infrastructure necessary for individual success translates to the success of society as a whole.

By improving teacher effectiveness, we can deliver on the promise of public education and help bring equality in education to all children across the country.

GET READY TO SPRINKLE

A **sprinkle** is a way
to build community
and break the ice.

NAME TAG

2
MINS

- 1 Stand in a circle.
- 2 Someone volunteers to be “It” and stands inside the circle.
- 3 Someone in the circle calls out another person’s name.
- 4 “It” must tag the person whose name was called before that person says someone else’s name.
- 5 Keep going until “It” tags someone.
- 6 Person tagged becomes “It”.
- 4 Keep playing!

LET'S DISCUSS

3
MINS

WHOLE
GROUP

What skills did you use to engage in this activity?

How might this activity relate to our learning today?

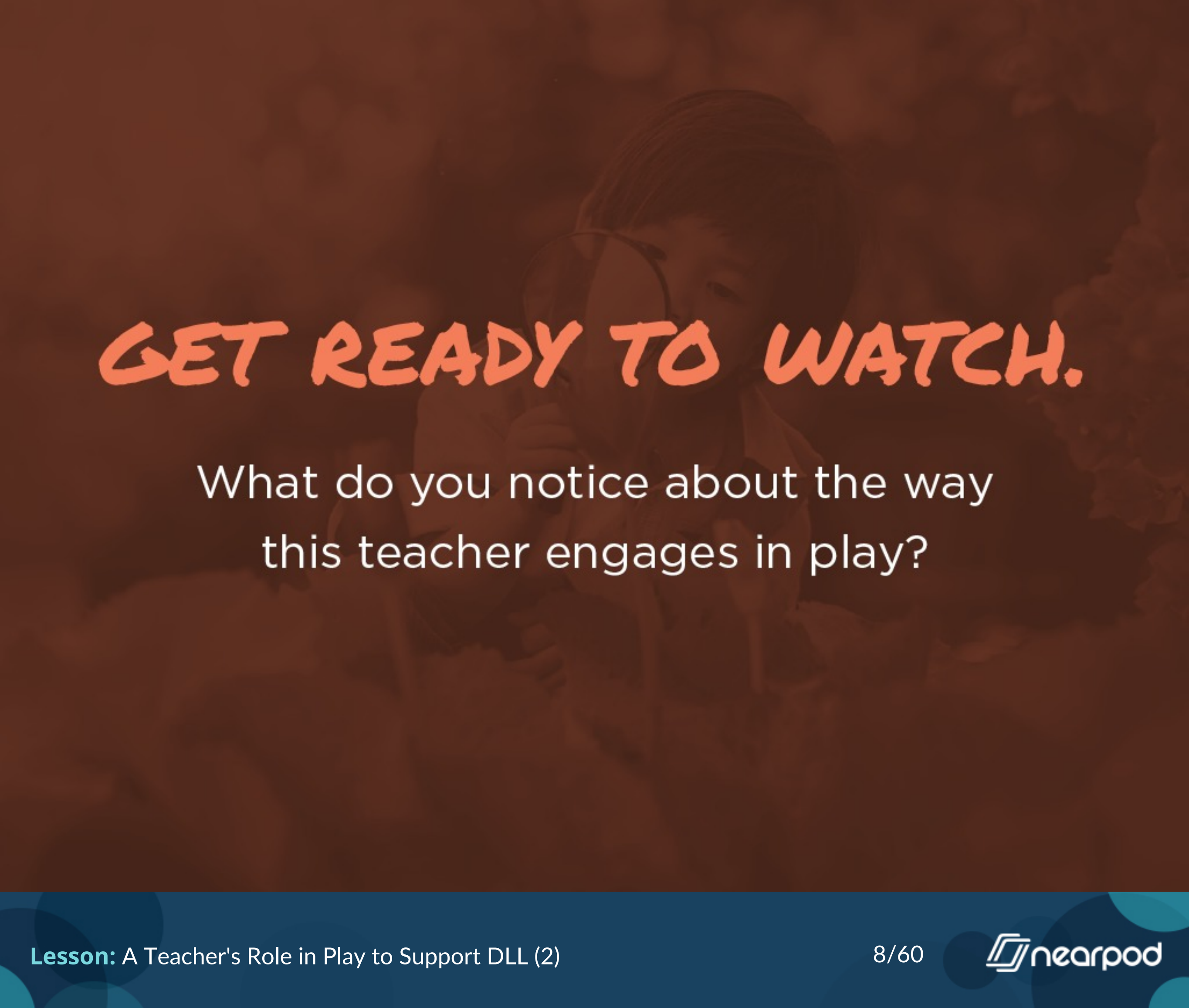
THE NEXT HOUR

By the end of this session, you will be able to support learning goals through six child-centered ways to engage in play by exploring:

- 1) A sugar cookie bakery
- 2) Six ways to play
- 3) A garden scene
- 4) Play Workshop



LET'S JUMP IN.



GET READY TO WATCH.

What do you notice about the way
this teacher engages in play?



<https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/Slide/358875586/iconipad>

LET'S DISCUSS

3
MINS

WHOLE
GROUP

What did you notice?

What might be the
unintended consequences of a
teacher engaging in play this way?

Even the most well-intentioned teachers can disrupt play. One reason this happens is **we interpret play from an adult lens.**

EXAMPLE ①

We see a child building a LEGO aircraft with three wings and no cockpit. We teach the “correct” way to build a plane. Later we learn the child was building a zoo for flying gorillas that sleep underwater.

EXAMPLE ②

A teacher jumps into the bakery scene and directs it like a bakery. However, in this bakery, fully baked goods fall from the sky. They are made by space aliens.

Fundamentals of Play

@nearpod 
#ReadytoRunPD

Disrupting play often leads to unintended consequences such as preventing students from:

- **THINKING FOR THEMSELVES**
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING INDEPENDENTLY**
- **LEADING THEIR OWN PLAY**
- **PRACTICING CREATIVITY**



Collaborate!

What are the benefits of child-centered play? (3 min)

Collaborate!

Collaborate!

YOU MAY HAVE POSTED...

Child-centered play promotes:

- Critical-thinking
- Problem-solving skills
- Language development
- Creativity and imagination
- Empathy

A dog is shown digging a hole in the sand. The dog is positioned in the center of the frame, with its head and front paws visible as it works. The sand is light-colored and the background is a dark, solid color. The text "LET'S DIG DEEPER." is overlaid on the image in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

LET'S DIG DEEPER.

Slideshow

There are several ways adults can engage in child-centered play.

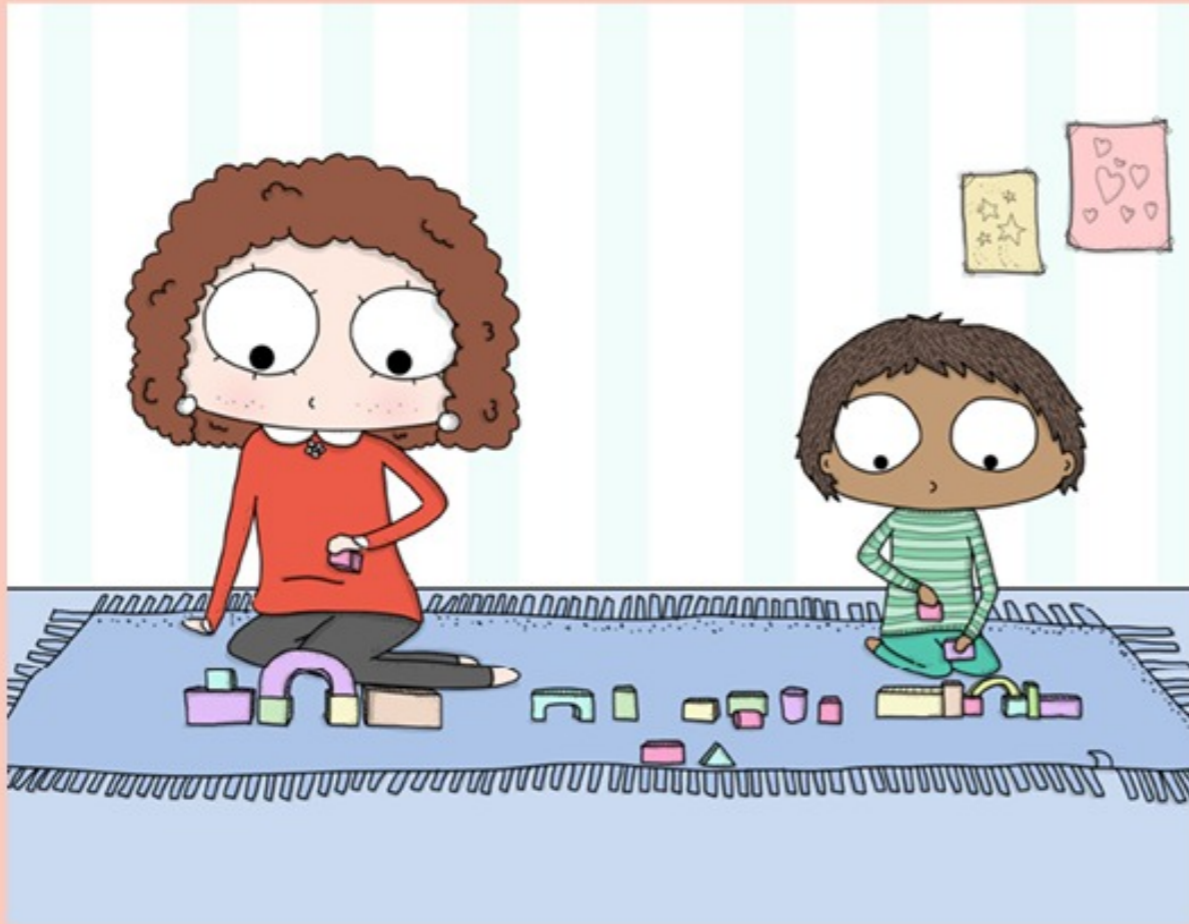
These ways of engaging preserve the integrity of play, allowing children to choose and lead their own learning.

**SCROLL THROUGH THE
SLIDESHOW TO LEARN MORE.**

(3 min)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

PARALLEL PLAY



Parallel Play means engaging in similar or totally different activities alongside children as they play. In parallel play, one plays side-by-side without influencing others.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

MODEL



Modeling means thinking aloud and/or demonstrating specific actions or behavior.

Modeling is like an open invitation to imitate or join; it is not a direction or command.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

POSE A QUESTION



Posing questions means asking children open-ended questions about their play.

In order to maintain the integrity of play, the question posed must be an authentic one - not one intended to check for understanding or assess - you must really want to know the answer.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

POSE A PROBLEM



Posing problems means introducing new challenges to a play situation.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

CHANGE, ADD OR REMOVE MATERIALS



Changing, adding or removing materials means...changing, adding or removing materials from a play space in order to respond to children's needs and/or maintain novelty.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

OBSERVE



Observing means collecting information about students: play patterns, language, peer interactions, etc. Observation allows students to take ownership of their own play, providing opportunities for you to identify patterns, strengths, needs, etc.

*Don't underestimate the power of observation!

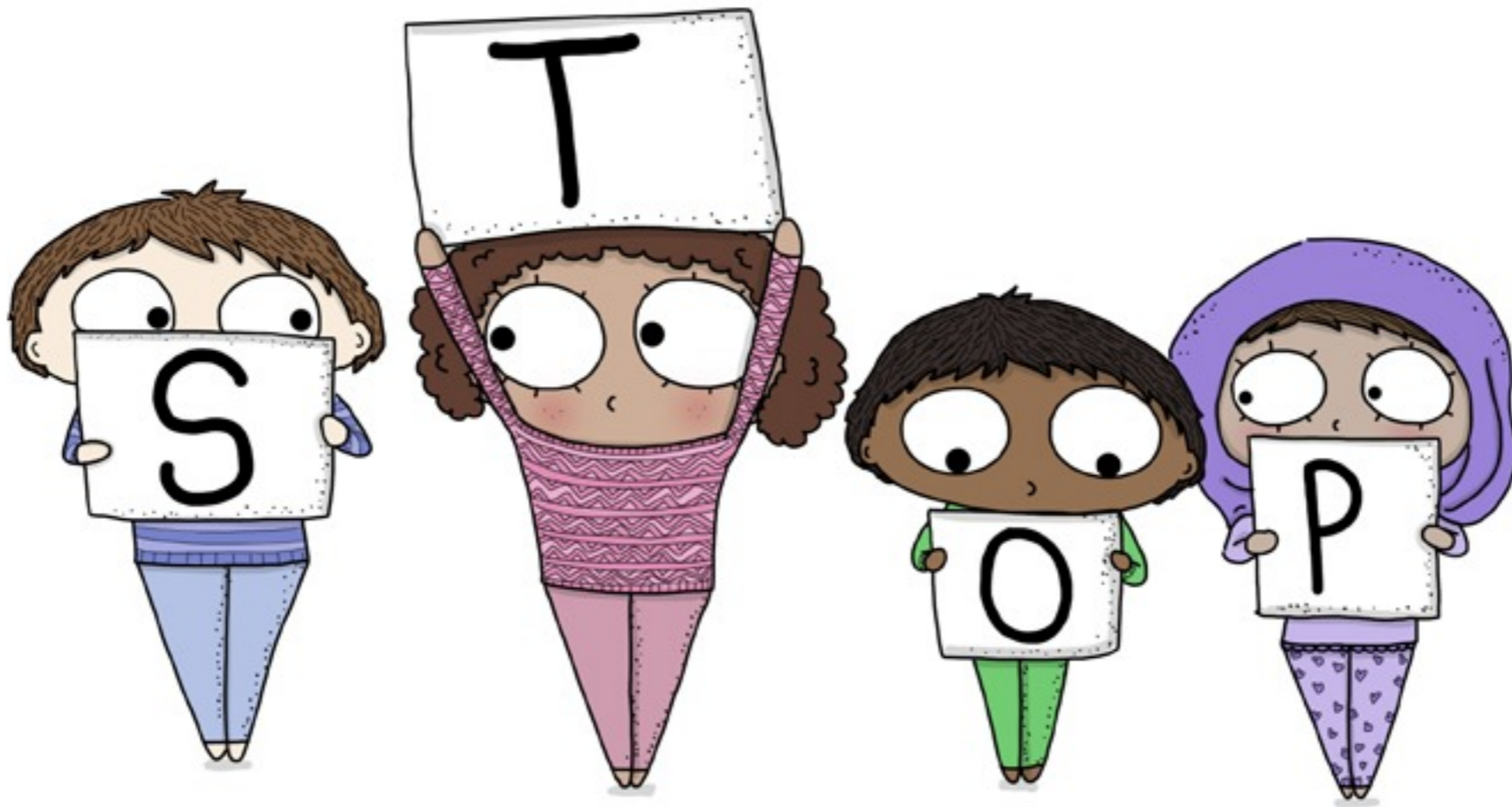
LET'S DISCUSS

2
MINS

PAIRS

What did you notice?

What does this make you wonder?



There is one more
critical piece to consider.


Slideshow

Before we engage in child-centered play,
we must first identify a learning goal.

**CHECK OUT A FEW COMMON
LEARNING GOALS ON
THE SLIDE BELOW.**

(1 min)

Fundamentals of Play

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SUPPORT SOCIAL SKILLS

Ex: Student rarely plays collaboratively with others

CREATE SCHEMA

Ex: Student has not yet learned or experienced the gardening process

IMPROVE GROSS AND/OR FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Ex: Student wants to color in the lines

DEVELOP IMAGINATION

Ex: Student has a hard time using available materials in play

SUPPORT LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Ex: Student needs to build vocabulary for a specific context

1

2

GET READY TO WATCH.

We will use this video to explore different learning goals. Once we have established a learning goal, we can choose a play strategy to support it.



<https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/Slide/358875957/iconipad>

Draw It

Follow the directions on the slide below.

These two learners choose to play together everyday. Our goal will be to help them **expand their social skills and include other students in their play**. Highlight how you would engage in play to support this goal. Explain your thinking to a partner. (3 min)

PARALLEL PLAY: Pretend to dig a hole and plant a seed in the ground near the kids.

MODEL: Say, “This looks like a two person job. One person needs to water and one person needs to weed.” Pretend to pull weeds.

POSE A QUESTION: Ask, “What else do you think our garden needs? Who could we ask to help us?”

POSE A PROBLEM: Ask, “How might we work together to help more flowers grow in our garden?”

CHANGE, ADD, REMOVE MATERIALS: Bring a set of plastic gardening tools.

OBSERVE: Look for patterns across time.

A child's tricycle is shown on a carpeted floor. The image is dimmed and serves as a background for the text. The text is written in a bold, orange, hand-drawn style.

LET'S TRY
ANOTHER ONE.

Draw It

Follow the directions on the slide below.

We observe these students watering plants day after day. Our goal will be to help them **broaden their schema** around gardening. Highlight how you would engage in play to support this goal. Explain your thinking to a partner. (3 min)

PARALLEL PLAY: Run a flower shop next to the garden.

MODEL: Read a book about gardening and act it out.

POSE A QUESTION: Ask, “Where do the flowers come from?”

POSE A PROBLEM: Ask, “How do we grow this flower inside a house?”

CHANGE, ADD, REMOVE MATERIALS: Bring some flower pots.

OBSERVE: Watch how students appear to make sense of gardening.

A child is playing with a large, textured block on a carpeted floor. The child's hands are visible, one holding the block and the other reaching towards it. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a large piece of fabric. The text "READY FOR ANOTHER ONE?" is overlaid in a bold, orange, hand-drawn font.

READY FOR
ANOTHER ONE?

Draw It

Follow the directions on the slide below.

The words these two learners use are “water” and “flower.” Our goal will be to help them **increase gardening vocabulary**. Highlight how you would engage in play to support this goal. Explain your thinking to a partner. (3 min)

PARALLEL PLAY: Pretend to water a tree with a hose.

MODEL: Go on a walking field trip and point out neighborhood gardens.

POSE A QUESTION: Ask, “Why do you think there are so many bees near flowers?”

POSE A PROBLEM: Ask, “How can we protect this flower bud from the storm coming this weekend?”

CHANGE, ADD, REMOVE MATERIALS: Bring in soil.

OBSERVE: Listen for the language patterns during play.



LET'S TRY
ONE TOGETHER.

**CHILD-CENTERED WAYS
TO ENGAGE IN PLAY:**

- Parallel play
- Model
- Pose
- Po
- Cl materials
- O
- Oth



Collaborate!

Collaborate!



**TRY ONE
ON YOUR OWN.**

Open Ended Question

**CHILD-CENTERED WAYS
TO ENGAGE IN PLAY:**

- Parallel play
- Model
- Pose a question
- Pose a problem
- Change, add, or remove materials
- Observe
- Other...

These two learners struggle to coordinate smaller movements in their wrists and hands. How might you engage in play to support their development of fine motor skills?

Still not sure how to support
these students?

OBSERVE.

Remember, observation allows
students to lead their own play...
which gives you the opportunity to learn
more about their strengths and needs.

TO RECAP...

- ① We can support learning through intentional, child-centered engagement in play.
- ② Before engaging in play, we should identify a learning goal(s).
- ③ Once we have identified specific learning goals, we can decide how to engage in play. Child-centered ways to engage in play include:

- **PARALLEL PLAY**
- **MODEL**
- **POSE A QUESTION**
- **POSE A PROBLEM**
- **CHANGE, ADD, OR REMOVE MATERIALS**
- **OBSERVE**

Table Group Discussion

How can types of play support language development?

Open Ended Question



How can play support language development?

Play Workshop

Workshop Components:

Mini Lesson: 3-5 min

Planning: 1-3 min

Play Time: 30 min

Share: 3-5 min

Plan for Your Classroom



Workshop Component	Time	Your Plan
Mini-Lesson	3-5 minutes	
Planning	1-3 minutes	
Play Time	30 + minutes	
Share	3-5 minutes	



LET'S REFLECT!



Collaborate!

Write one thing you are going to implement or try after attending this professional learning session.

Collaborate!

Collaborate!

POST-PD CHALLENGE

- ① Observe one student and identify a specific learning goal.
- ② Determine how you will engage in play to help this student reach this goal.
- ③ Engage in play.
- ④ Share your observations and reflections with a coach, PLC, mentor, or colleague.

A dog is sitting on a wooden floor, looking towards a large, multi-layered cake on a white pedestal. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, brownish tint. The dog is on the left, and the cake is on the right.

PLEASE

take our survey
so we don't get fired!

Love, The Ready to Run PD team

A photograph of four people sitting on the floor, each holding and reading a book. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent brown filter. The text 'RESOURCES TO SHARE' is written in a bold, orange, hand-drawn font across the center of the image.

RESOURCES TO SHARE

FUNDAMENTALS OF PLAY: A TEACHER'S ROLE IN PLAY

A Cheat Sheet

Even the most well-intentioned teachers can disrupt play. One reason this happens is we interpret play from an adult lens.

Examples:

1. We see a child building a LEGO aircraft with three wings and no cockpit. We teach the "correct" way to build a plane. Later we learn the child was building a zoo for flying gorillas that sleep underwater.
2. A teacher jumps into the bakery scene and directs it like a bakery. However, in this bakery, fully baked goods fall from the sky. They are made by space aliens.

Disrupting play often leads to negative outcomes such as preventing students from:

- thinking for themselves
- problem-solving
- leading their peers
- practicing critical thinking

CHILD-CENTERED

- **PARALLEL PLAY** means playing different activities alongside children who play side-by-side without influencing each other.
- **MODELING** means demonstrating specific actions or behavior. Modeling is not meant to imitate or join; it is not a direction or command.
- **POSING QUESTIONS** means asking open-ended questions about their play. In order to maintain the integrity of play, the question posed must be an authentic one - not one intended to check for understanding or assess - you must really want to know the answer.
- **POSING PROBLEMS** means introducing new challenges to a play situation.

<https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/Webpage/359139581/iconoriginal.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAINYAGM2YWP2OWQBA&Expires=2147483647&Signature=paamnvtRHE6T9m3GYIUED2rDXMQ%3D>

language, peer interactions, etc. Observation allows students to take ownership of their own play, providing opportunities for you to identify patterns, strengths, needs, etc.

If you liked this
there is good news...
THERE ARE MORE!

Check out the breadth
and depth of the
**READY TO RUN PD
COLLECTION**
on the following slide.

HOME



ABOUT

<https://www.readytorunpdcollection.com/>

A collection of over two dozen, 1-hour **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WORKSHOPS** that school leaders can facilitate themselves.

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