

Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide is an invitation to further explore playful learning and joyful teaching in preschool. The reflection questions, cut outs, and activities promote and highlight playful learning and joyful teaching. Helpful resources can be found in the resources section of this guide.

Try this breathing exercise!

"Teachers who engage in mindfulness-based practices have been shown to have lower cortisol levels and to be more responsive and compassionate towards their students, less emotionally reactive, and more intentional in their teaching practices."

— Robles, Meghan

"How Mindfulness Can Benefit Preschool Teachers." *Edutopia*, George Lucas Educational Foundation, 9 Mar. 2021

4-4-8 Breathing

Take a moment and focus on your breathing.

Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, taking the breath into your belly.

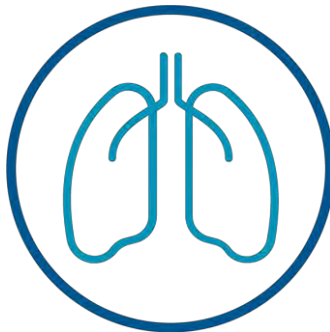
Hold your breath for 4 counts.

Release your breath through your mouth with a whooshing sound for 8 counts.

You can repeat this exercise 3 or 4 times for a full minute of mindful breathing.



4 breathe in



4 hold



8 breathe out

Reflecting Together

What does joyful teaching and learning look and feel like in preschool?

Framework for Effective Practice

The National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (NCECDTL) uses a house to represent five integral elements of quality teaching and learning for children ages birth to in all program options. The six elements of the House Framework include:



- Foundation: Providing nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments
- First Pillar: Implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices
- Second Pillar: Using screening and ongoing assessment of children's skills
- Roof: Embedding highly individualized teaching and learning
- Center: Engaging parents and families
- Siding: strengthening equity-focused practices

When these elements are connected, they form a single structure that surrounds the family in the center. The family is at the heart of the house because each house element is implemented in partnership with parents and families in their cultural and community context. Staff may use this House Framework to foster children's development and learning.

Playful Learning

Free Play includes child-led play involving exploration, imagination, and investigation.

Guided Play is where adults or older child interact with younger children. It involves allowing the child to lead where the conversation and the play goes, layering in opportunities for extension of learning.

Games or board games, group games, and other rule-based play can help children develop cognitive and social-emotional skills. This type of play is typically seen in the preschool years, and since every child develops in their own unique way, you might work with some older toddlers who find joy in game play!

Reflecting Together

When you think of guided play, what comes to mind?

In the next few weeks, we invite you to notice moments of guided play in your learning environment. Record the moment below.

Honoring Families



Honoring Families in Playful Learning

- The first and most important teachers of their children
- Our partners with a critical role in their family's development
- Experts about their child and their family
- Valuable and important contributors

How are you currently honoring families in your learning environment?

What are some new ways you are going to center families in your care and education practices in each of the following areas?

Environment:

Communication:

Engagement:

Guided Play

Write down one idea about how you can set up the environment for joy and engagement.

Write down one idea about how you can follow the child's lead.

Write down one way your interactions can be responsive.

Think of one child in your learning setting, what is one learning goal you might add during guided play with that child?



Small Change – Big Impact

We know that children vary in their learning characteristics and how they engage with the people and materials in their learning environments. These small changes — also known as curriculum modifications — are made based on the individual needs of a child to help promote their engagement and participation. And we know that when children are more engaged, they have more opportunities to learn!

Some children might need more highly individualized teaching to help them fully participate and engage — such as embedded teaching or intensive, individualized teaching — making curriculum modifications based on a child’s individual learning needs can be a great place to start to support engagement.

Is there a child in your program who would benefit from a curriculum modification?

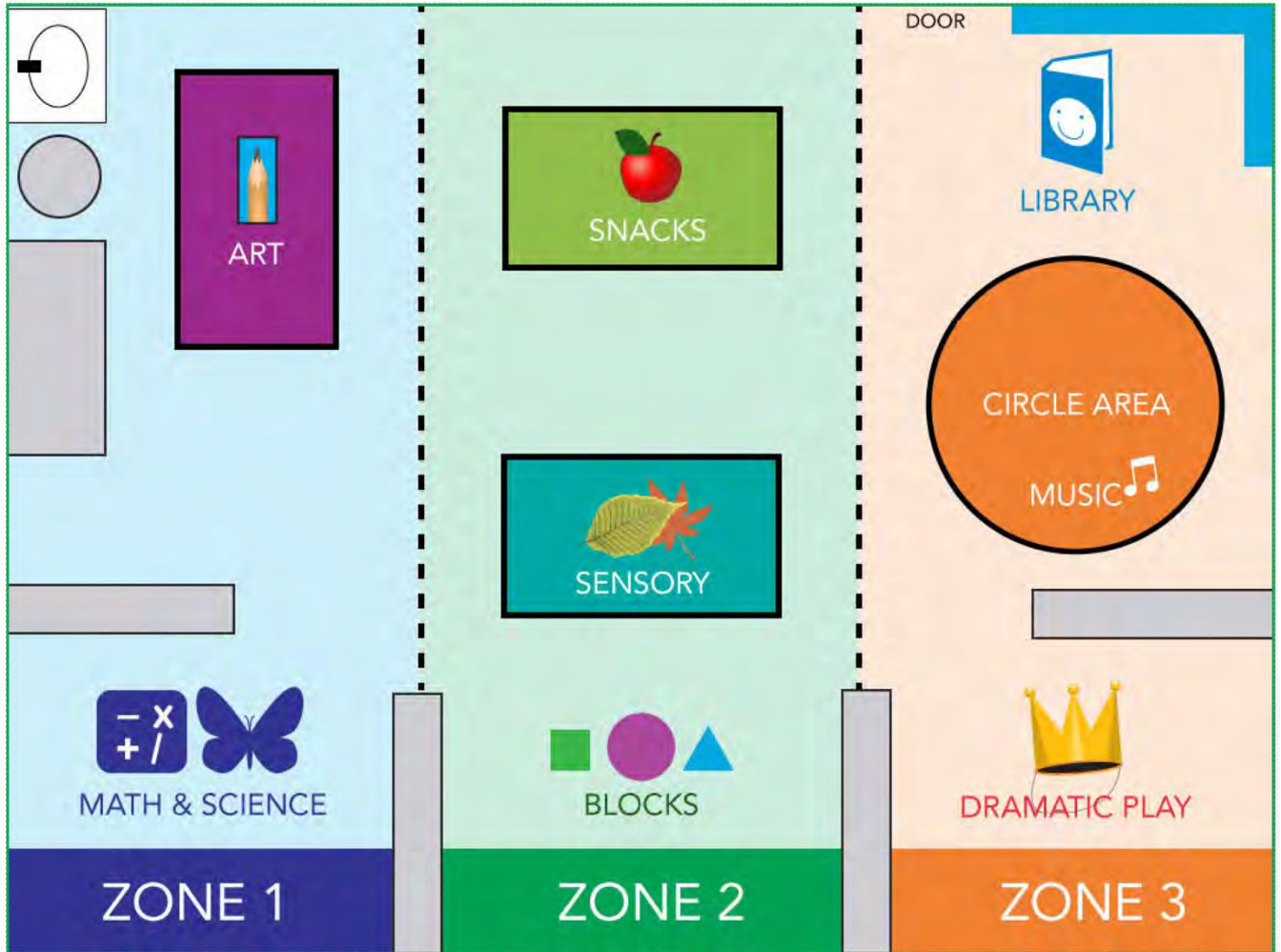
What kinds of modifications would you make based on the child’s preferences?

Can you think of an instance where a play plan could be helpful for a child in your learning environment? What might that plan include?

Teacher Toolbox

The following tools can support the practice of zoning in your learning environment.

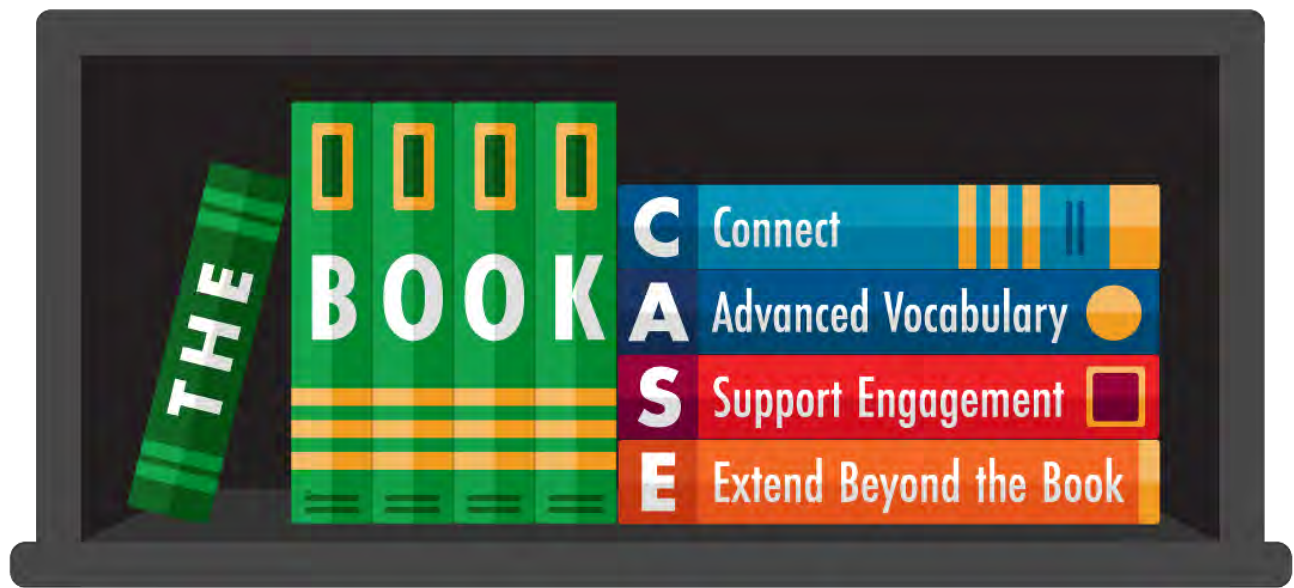
- **Classroom Map with Zoning Areas:** The purpose of this activity is to work with your classroom team to decide how to use zoning in your classroom.



- **Staff Zoning Chart:** The purpose of this activity is to work with your classroom team to decide how to use zoning in your classroom.

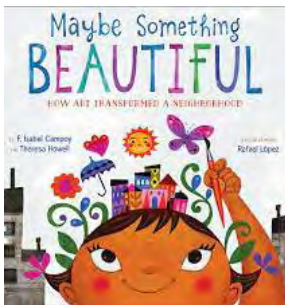
Activities/Transitions	Staff Person A	Staff Person B	Staff Person C
Arrival	Greet children and parents	Help children put away backpacks	Get tables ready for breakfast
Breakfast	At red table	At blue table	At green table
Transitions	Signal transition/blow bubbles	Clean up breakfast tables	Help children to transition

The BookCASE



Books can provide many opportunities to engage children in deep thinking, conversation, and in sharing their ideas and experiences, guiding us where to go next with the curriculum. What ideas do we have? What questions are coming up? What do we want to explore next as a learning community?

Making the CASE and Book List



Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood
by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell, illustrated by Rafael Lopez

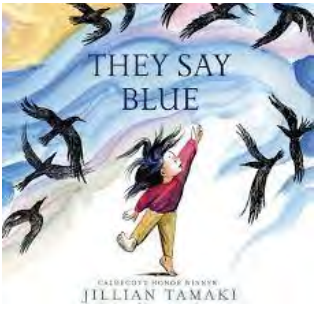
Available in Spanish — *Quizás Algo Hermoso: Cómo el arte transformó un barrio*

Connect: This book connects to the joy of learning by introducing us to Mira, a young artist who brought beauty and color to her neighborhood through art! This connects to the approaches to learning ELOF domain, specifically creativity.

Advanced vocabulary: Advanced vocabulary is scattered throughout this book with words such as sparkling, glowing, muralist, pizzazz, and bebop! Pause when coming across words that are new to children, invite them to share their thoughts, ideas and questions about the words.

Support engagement: Pause briefly while reading and invite children to think about what they would add to a mural, reminding them to hold their ideas until the end of the story. Record their ideas on large chart paper.

Extend: Invite children to collaborate with one another and make a mural. This can be done outside with sidewalk chalk or by hanging a large piece of paper on the wall inside the learning environment.



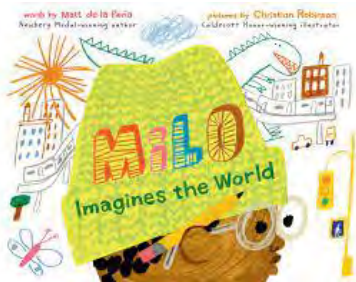
They Say Blue
by Jillian Tamaki

Connect: *They Say Blue* is an “invitation to wonder” about the world and the things that children experience throughout the year. This book connects to the Approaches to Learning ELOF domain Initiative and Curiosity.

Advanced vocabulary: This book is full of similes and beautiful nature descriptions, comparing one thing to another. When you see a simile, point it out, some examples include “grass looks like a golden ocean,” or “as clear as glass.”

Support engagement: Ask children open ended questions throughout the story, questions such as “what does summer sound like to you?,” “what is something you feel in your body?,” “what is something you’ve observed through a window?.” Have a large chart paper set up ahead of time where you can record children’s ideas and brainstorming. These ideas can be a guide for our next curriculum ideas!

Extend: After hearing children’s ideas, what opportunities can be offered to foster further exploration? Take a moment to think about what art supplies are available for children to use. Do they allow for the possibility of mixing colors and free expression?



Milo Imagines the World
by Matt de la Pena, illustrated by Christian Robinson

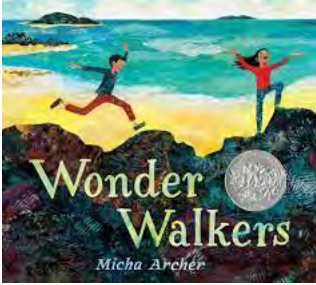
Available in Spanish — *Milo imagina el mundo*

Connect: Milo expresses his imagination by creating artwork inspired by the people he encounters and his life experiences, relating to our theme of joy and engaged learning. This book connects to the ELOF domain, Approaches to Learning and the subdomain, Creativity.

Advanced vocabulary: There are so many descriptive words in this text, words that encourage sounds while also introducing new vocabulary. Some examples include clatter, concentration, trudging, stride, bustling, tweet, tepid, clod, and clink.

Support engagement: This book may be a bit long to read in one sitting, so planning to read it over the course of the day is a great way to keep children engaged and interested. Educators could start it during a morning group time and then finish it at an afternoon group time or even in smaller groups throughout the day.

Extend: Invite children to think about and share their story ideas about the world around them. Record their ideas somewhere they can refer back to. Next, staple multiple pieces of paper together making blank books, where children can illustrate their stories!



Wonder Walkers
by Misha Archer

Connect: Two children express their curiosity and wonder about the world by asking open ended questions while taking a walk. This connects to the approaches to learning ELOF domain, Approaches to Learning and the subdomain, Initiative and Curiosity.

Advanced vocabulary: While there are many words in this book that children are already familiar with, they are being used in a new context such as “are forests the mountain’s fur?” Open a discussion around what these phrases might mean, inviting children to share their wonderments and ideas.

Support engagement: Pause while reading and invite children to answer the questions on the page.

Extend: Make space for and invite children to ask questions, writing down what they share. How can these questions be used to prompt conversations with and amongst the children in the learning community? How can these questions and ideas guide where you might go next with the curriculum?

Explore the BookCASE on Your Own

One book that our preschool learning community loves is:

Make the CASE:

Connect:

Advanced vocabulary:

Support engagement:

Extend:

Books I would like to add to our learning environment:

Helpful Resources

Online Resources

- Framework for Effective Practice
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/framework-effective-practice>
- Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>
- The LEGO foundation: Learning through play a summary: a review of the evidence
 - https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/0vvjvscx/learningthroughplay_areview_summary.pdf
- How Mindfulness Can Benefit Preschool Teachers
 - <https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-mindfulness-can-benefit-preschool-teachers/#:~:text=Teachers%20who%20engage%20in%20mindfulness,intentional%20in%20their%20teaching%20practices>
- Guided Play with Roberta Golinkoff, Ph.D.
 - <https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/guided-play-with-roberta-golinkoff-ph-d/>
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8, Fourth Edition
 - <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/books/dap-fourth-edition>
- The Power of Playful Learning in the Early Childhood Setting
 - <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/summer2022/power-playful-learning>
- Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families: Strength-Based Attitudes
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/building-partnerships-guide-developing-relationships-families/strength-based-attitudes>
- Making Learning Meaningful
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/making-learning-meaningful>
- Following Children's Lead 15-minute In-service Suites
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/following-childrens-lead>
- Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction 15-minute In-service Suites
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/curriculum-modifications-introduction>
- Curriculum Modifications: Adult Support 15-minute In-service Suites
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/adult-support>
- Curriculum Modifications: Child Preferences 15-minute In-service Suites

- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/child-preferences>
- Zoning to Maximize Learning 15-minute In-service Suites
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/zoning-maximize-learning>

Mobile Apps

- ELOF2GO Mobile App
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elof2go-mobile-app>
- Text4Teachers
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/text4teachers>
- Ready DLL Mobile App
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/ready-dll-mobile-app>

Online Communities

- MyPeers: Teacher Time Community
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community>