

Partnering with Parents to Support the Development of Creativity

Roselia Ramirez: Welcome. Welcome, everyone. I hope that you are having a good day so far. I'd like to start by thanking you for joining our session today, Partnering with Parents to Support the Development of Creativity. I'm Roselia Ramirez, and I'm a senior training and technical assistant specialist at the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or DTL for short. I am one of your facilitators for this webinar series. And I'm usually joined by my colleague Joyce Escorcia. Unfortunately, she couldn't be with us for this session. But I am thankful that one of our partners over from the National Center on Pyramid Model Innovations could step in.

With that, hi, Ashley. It's so great to see you. Of course, we thank you for joining us. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Ashley MacNish: Sure. Hi, Roselia. I'm happy to be here today. Like Roselia said, I am here from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. I'm a staff member there. I help support their family engagement team, as well as provide a lot of technical support and assistance for implementing pyramid model into home visiting, part C systems. And I also provide technical assistance for DTL. Just like Roselia. And before all of that, I did have five years' experience myself as a home visitor. I'm really excited here to dig into the creativity topic.

Roselia: Awesome. Well, thanks so much again for joining us, Ashley. And we're so happy that you could join us to share some of your knowledge and expertise. As a reminder, we've been talking through this in each of our webinars. We are threading the same topic throughout the Teacher Time series, education managers as well as the Coaching Corner webinar series. Each of the series is making connections as the topic applies to the different roles. We are hoping that this approach will provide some opportunities for learning and collaboration across each of these roles.

The topic and the focus for this integrate approach has been on the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or ELOF. Specifically, the approach is to learn domain. And today's webinar is part four of four. Each of the webinars was focused on one of the four subdomains, which we're going to review shortly. But don't worry if you miss though the first three session that we've already had. You can always go back and catch those on demand or on the ECLKC, and we're going to be sharing more about how to do that before we end our session today. And then we also want to mention that whether you are new to your position or perhaps just interested in taking a deeper dive into the approaches to learning domain, we do encourage you to explore the resources that we have provided in the participant's guide resource list. If you turn to the very back of that, we have a pretty extensive list of resources that we have provided and put together for you.

Let's dive a little bit into this approaches to learning domain. And just kind of review each of those sub domains that we've been talking about. So far, we have covered the emotional and behavioral self-regulation. We have covered cognitive and self-regulation as well as initiative

and curiosity. For our webinar today, Ashley and I are going to be exploring that last subdomain, which is creativity. We're really excited to be taking a deeper dive into this particular subdomain.

OK, but before we do that, we want to take a look at our learning objectives. These are the two main things that have helped to frame our session today. By the end, we are hoping to accomplish two main things. The first of that is that we would like for our participants to be able to not only explain creativity and imagination in young children, but also to really be – have an understanding and just a deeper sense of how creativity supports the developmental growth and learning. And then second is that home visitors – as home visitors that you are able to identify strategies that you can share with families to kind of help foster children's imagination and creativity through play.

OK, let's get the conversation started, and we would like to do that by hearing from you. Remember we mentioned that purple Q&A widget when we went over some of those platform features. We're going to invite you to go there now. And we're asking for you to share with us what creativity means to you. When you think about creativity, how do you define what creativity is? While folks are reflecting and thinking about that, I'm going to ask our guest speaker Ashley to join into the conversation and share with us how she defines creativity.

Ashley: Thanks, Roselia. Well, I think often we hear the term "creativity", and we think, "Well, I'm not an artist. I'm not a musician, right? That's not really a skill I have." But I think creativity is so much more than that. It's this impulse that we have to find new ways of doing things, expressing ourselves. I mean, I think about my everyday role and my job. Where I focus a lot on organization and structure. Not that I don't have opportunities to be creative in my work. But I go home, and I can be creative in the way I cook, the way I decorate my home. It's not about being efficient. I think it's about valuing the process of trying new things out, coming up with new ideas outside of the box. And just seeing how it works and how it feels. And I feel like it's also kind of its own reward. Although my husband could say "Hey that looks great on the shelf" even if he didn't give me that positive feedback, it would just help me innately feel good. Because I did it and I tried it.

Roselia: Yeah. That's right in line with what we have coming into the chat box, Ashley. Just using your imagination, exploring the world. Right in line with what books are sharing.

Ashley: That's great. Yeah, and I love any opportunity during the day to take time and slow down and be creative. And thinking about it in young children, it really fosters their mental growth by providing opportunities for them to just be present and explore and think outside the box. And try out some of their new ideas, and problem solving. It's really kind of like that executive function and action where we're giving them opportunities to plan and then try it out. The more we can do that, it really helps build their brains too.

Roselia: Yeah, I really think that really speaks to that individual uniqueness of children. And I really think that no one is more creative than young children at work and during their play. There are children – young children are – they're just so talented in making something out of

nothing and anything out of everything. It's just really all about the process of creating and exploring that world around them. Let's shift gears now and make some connections to the Head State Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

Ashley: Thanks, Roselia. I'm just going to let these all pop up here.

Roselia: OK.

Ashley: I think relating it back to the practices, I think if we bring up this topic of creativity with families or parents they might be like, "Why is this important?" But the cool thing about creativity is it can be embedded with all of these different domains. Really, I want to highlight the perceptual motor, physical development language and literacy and social, emotional development. Just thinking about those small motor skills, for example. If we're letting children play Play-Doh or have a messy activity or draw or paint, they're really developing those small motor skills that can impact their writing in the future. And really build those muscles. And then if we're thinking about that large motor development, something as fun as making a hard transition fun. Let their child move in a silly way. Like hop like a bunny or crawl like a bear. And then even like setting up a fun little obstacle course for them to go through. And really build those muscles.

And then language and literacy too. Think about if we're really present with our children while they're being creative and we're talking to them about what it is they're experiencing, the materials that they're holding. The actions that they're doing. It reminds me of this family on YouTube actually I watch. And they're – both parents are musicians. And they have this one video where their 2-year-old is painting. And she asks her mom to draw an apple. And then the mom just gets curious and asks her what she's painting. And she said – this is a 2-year-old – and she said, "I'm painting an astronaut." And she's like, "No, actually, I think it's a slide." But, I mean, there are other videos where that child is talking about vinyl records. And she's 2. It just shows me that those parents are constantly labeling things and talking and the growth in that child's vocabulary is just amazing.

And then my favorite thing to talk about social and emotional development. It really – when we're creative, we're focused. We need to focus our brain to come up with that planning and try new things and problem solve. That really helps us to regulate our bodies. Our emotions, maybe if something doesn't go the way we planned, and we get upset, and that's an experience too. Or, also providing children with choices and feeling like they have control in that moment as well.

Roselia: Yeah, and we know that home visitors are always on the go. We can't forget about this amazing resource. Some of you may already be familiar with it. This will be review. But if you're new in your role or maybe you're not as familiar or not sure how to use this resource. The ELOF@Home app has been designed specifically for home visitors. And it really aligns the ELOF with effective home visiting practices. We sometimes tend to forget about this resource. But it's a great way to have the ELOF right at your fingertips to make connections just before or during the home visit.

With that, you know actually I'm kind of curious. Let's do a quick pulse check to see how many of our audience members perhaps have used this resource. I'm going to pop up a little pulse check on there. You're going to see a thumbs up – you're going to see a green thumb and a red thumb. If you are familiar and you have used this resource, give us a green thumbs up. And then if you have not used this resource, go ahead and do the red, the thumbs down. It's just to kind of indicate that you haven't. Go ahead and – go ahead and let us know if you have used this resource, the thumbs up or the thumbs down. Let's give that a second. I know for me, I sometimes tend to forget about the ELOF@Home app. I'm just kind of curious to see if any of our audience members are familiar with it. Or have used it. All right. Well, I'm not sure if that worked – if it came out.

Ashley: I'm seeing people respond in the chat, in the Q&A.

Roselia: In the chat, yeah.

Ashley: Some thumbs up and some thumbs down. I don't know if it worked because Jennifer asked, "Where is it?" And that they can't access it. But I see some yes – some yeses and some nos that people are responding instead in the chat box.

Roselia: OK, so it's kind of like a mixture. Let's go ahead and – let's go ahead and keep – let's keep moving forward here. These images are actual screen shots of what you would see when you're working with the app. Each developmental domains and subdomains can be explored. And they're categorized by infant/toddler and then preschool age children. You kind of have that breakdown there. And then you can further breakdown the age groups. For instance, in the infant/toddler category, you have birth to 9 months. There's 8 to 18 months. 16 to 36 months and then indicators by 36 months. Once you select your domain and the subdomain that you want to explore, you can begin to take a look at three different categories. You have goals. You have home visiting practices, and then there's even like the story and little activity that you can do to kind of check your understanding.

For example, I'm a home visitor. And I'm going to visit a family with an infant who is 9 months old. If I take a look at my ELOF@Home, it tells me that the goals for a child between 8 to 18 months are the following: Taking a look at using creativity, child uses creativity to increase understanding and learning. And they do this by finding new things to do with familiar, everyday objects. An example would be using a cooking pot for a hat or a spoon as a drumstick. And then under imagination, it's telling me that the child shows imagination in play and interaction with others. And then this is demonstrated by using sounds, gestures, signs, or words playfully through songs, finger plays, or games.

One of the things that I really like about this resource and the way that it's laid out that it provides that statement, this is demonstrated by. You actually get an example of the how. What does this look like? This is, as you can see, gives you a great starting point. where you as a home visitor can then partner with the parents to plan those intentional opportunities. And then it also provides you with the language to support a parent's understanding of the goals in each of the areas.

Ashley: Yeah, Roselia, and then I just want to highlight the – that the ELOF@Home then has the practices. If you see that little line at the bottom of this – of the big phone screen. And it's in green. Roselia was just talking through the goals. What I love about the app is it walks you through the process. We're looking at the goal first. And the creativity domain. Now we're looking at the practices. And the way it's set up is that organizes the practices into these three sections that you see here. Interactions, environment, and individualization. These are practices that home visitors can now use to partner with parents during the home visit to achieve those established goals. And in the context that we're talking about today, that's related to helping families provide those everyday opportunities to support their child's creativity in their day.

For example, if I'm a home visitor. I have a family with a 9-month-old. I'd like to point out the social, emotional person in me. I'm also building relationships with that family so that I know them more on an individual level. And thinking about the types of practices that support their specific learning stories or values or priorities. I'm going to first look at those goals, like Roselia pointed out, that are associated with child and children at that specific age, so a 9-month-old infant. Then I'm going to look at the practices, and I'm going to think about the family I'm working with. And I'm just going to pull out some practices that I know that I could use during that specific home visit and helping that family achieve that goal.

For example, if I choose the practice that is planned developmentally appropriate opportunities with parents that tap into their child's creativity and imagination. The practices I could use as the home visitor during that visit is I can share information with families about what creativity might look like for a 9-month-old. I also might ask them what that could like in their family context. Maybe asking some open-ended questions. Maybe it's singing songs during a diaper change. Sharing stories that from their own cultural tradition that they like to pass down. And then lastly, on the bottom, it's not lit up. But it's a story and a scenario activity. That really helps to visualize and illustrate the practice for the home visitors. They can think about the practices they want to us, and then see the intent, what that practice is supposed to look like to inform their decision making and understanding in the use of those practices. But I really just love because I was an early interventionist. I was on-the-go all the time. If I needed some quick problem solving or quick prep for a visit, this is a great resource to go to.

Roselia: Yeah, absolutely. That's why we definitely wanted to highlight it, just to remind you that it's not – sometimes we think about having our little ELOF book with us. And it's just so much information. And each family is so unique and individual. Now you have this resource right at your fingertips that you can reference.

OK, let's – we're going to move onto our next portion of our session. And it's entitled "Let's Get Creative." For this portion, I'm going to invite Ashley to get us started on some strategies and resources that you can share with parents and families to support and encourage creativity within themselves as well as their children.

Ashley: Thanks, Roselia. When I think about creativity, I'm going to think about opportunities. What times throughout the day am I offering for or helping parents to offer those moments for children to be creative. Because children need plenty of opportunities throughout their day to

really grow their creative play and their creative thinking. We also want to think about variety. I know, in some of your comments you were talking about the ability to provide a lot of modalities for children to explore and get creative. In your role as a home visitor, it's really about partnering with parents and helping them to think about what are these opportunities, the variety that they can offer to their child in a way that really fits their family's cultural context. I kind of think about a few guidelines to follow when you do this. Helping families to understand and use opportunities that are based on the child's actual interests and ideas. For some families they could answer that question right away. Other families you might support them and just kind of sitting back and observing their child in the moment. Notice what they're picking up, what they're holding, what holds their attention.

Another way is helping them to think about the materials that they already have in their home that they could use. Or, in their environment, in the community. Because the more varied experience that children have, and the wider base that they have to create that creative expression. And then we talked about incorporate – helping families think about their own cultural context. Think about what are their values, what are their beliefs, what traditions do they want to – that are creative do they want to have their child experience? Because culture really is the context where parents raise their children and children develop. Again in building those relationships with families, taking that time to learn about the family's culture, their home language, routines, materials that they use. Because they might have ideas that we don't even think about in ways that they can help their child to be creative.

And then helping families to understand the process for allowing children to make choices. I think we think about parenting styles and everything, that sometimes providing choices doesn't come naturally to everybody. But letting them know not only is the ability to make choices something that supports social and emotional development, but also helping them think about, it's not necessarily about giving children free rein. Of course with creativity there are moments we can do that that are comfortable for the family. But that families can provide choices that they're comfortable with. Maybe a family isn't comfortable with messy play, but they are comfortable with coloring or using Play-Doh. Parents can provide those choices that they're comfortable with to their child for them to choose from. And then just kind of sitting back and allowing their children to explore and be present in the moment. And try things. And helping families to not necessarily be directive in those moments. And say, the truck is yellow, how many circles did you make? And asking those questions. I know as adults we want to do that all the time. But just helping them to maybe shift their mindset a little bit to be curious about what their child is curious about. And maybe ask some open-ended questions like "What are you drawing?" Anything you'd like to add to that, Roselia?

Roselia: Yeah, these are all great suggestions and ideas. But one of the things that you can also do as a home visitor is support parents to see that they really do have everything that they need to bring out creativity and imagination in their child. We know that young children learn best when they play, and when they're exploring. When they're just naturally exploring their environment with the support of a caring adult. One of the things – What we do know is that one of the main goals of the home-based program option is to support parents in using that

home as a learning environment. The home visit really creates an opportunity where you can – you can talk with parents about supporting their child's learning during everyday routines and within that home environment. We really want for parents to be able to make connections that creativity and learning are taking our – there's ability for that creativity and that learning to happen both within that indoor as well as that outdoor environment. And that creativity and learning can happen and take place during those everyday interactions and routines.

Here is one thing too that we really want – we really want to emphasize, because we do know that parents can sometimes feel overwhelmed. And they may feel like creating those intentional opportunities means more time out of an already busy day. You can encourage families to utilize just those everyday activities such as housekeeping as well as those caregiving routines as opportunities to really be intentional and to plan and an opportunity to practice the child skills but also their skills as their child's teacher in the context of something that they engaged in naturally. And then also creating those opportunities for parents to see that everyday materials and objects allow children to explore and learn in the context of their environment, while spurring creativity and then supporting that open-ended learning.

Another strategy is that you can model the use of descriptive and engaging language. Ashley gave a really lovely example of that YouTube video where the parent, you can clearly see that through what the child was saying that those opportunities have been there where it has been modeled, using that descriptive and that engaging language. This – it happens by telling children what is happening around them. And then it helps them to make those connections of actions to language, as well as building and expanding those language skills.

To summarize, during your regular home visits you can discuss routines, everyday materials and objects, and how parents can use language to promote learning in the home environment. And a useful strategy to help families focus on what they are doing already and share with them minor adjustments that they can make so that they don't feel that it's something extra that they have to add to their day. Now, we do want to acknowledge that making the shift to using materials found within the home to support learning, it can be challenging. I think sometimes as home visitors we think that we have to kind of bring our little bag of tricks in with us.

We want to point out a useful resource if you're not familiar with it. It can be found on your resource list again, in your participants guide. But it's the home visitor E-Institute, and it's called "Leave the Bag Challenge." This particular resource is found on the IPB, on the ECLKC. It not only provides information, but there are examples that you can work through. And it really again, is focused on again, leaving the bag at home and utilizing those materials within the environment and incorporating that within daily routines.

Ashley: I love that resource. I've never heard of it before, Roselia. Now I want to check it out myself. Kind of just piggy backing off of what Roselia was saying – and what I was saying a little before we got to her slide – but as a home visitor, you're in a unique position to support ... We look at parents as their child's teacher, number one teacher. You're supporting those parent child interactions. Whether it is providing that positive descriptive praise, that Roselia was talking about. Rather than saying, "great job," when that girl was painting, you might say – you

might model for a parent, saying, "Wow, I really love how you made the girl's shirt blue." And it's really helping to, I guess, lift up and acknowledge and validate the child's experience and build upon their creativity that it's a safe thing for them to do. It's a good thing for them to do.

Also helping families just like Roselia was saying. It can sometimes feel like a challenge to use those materials in the natural setting. But these materials can be open ended. In some ways, using that mindset shift there might be helpful to help families think about what they have. I mean an empty egg carton can be so fun. Think about recycled materials. Bandanas, scarves, the picture here has a laundry basket, bowls. Hats and pans. There are different materials. And then once those materials are selected, helping families to become kind of a play, creative partner with their child. Again, not directing what the child is doing, but being curious with them. If the child has a truck and they're pushing it, refraining from saying "What color is the truck?" Maybe asking a question like "Where is that truck going?" And then helping the child through your questions to construct like an imaginary narrative and really build upon those pretend play skills. If the child says, "The truck is going to the party." Oh, "What kind of food is the truck bringing to the party?" And asking those follow up questions.

And then helping parents, because again it is not natural for adults to be play partners or creative partners. We want to direct. That's what we're used to doing. Modeling for them what they could – how they could do that. A child is playing with Play-Doh, modeling for them how to roll the Play-Doh. How to maybe like use one of those little knives to make a pattern in the Play-Doh. Stack the Play-Doh and then also while they're doing it, modeling language about being curious. Like "Oh I wonder what would happen if I put these Play-Doh balls on top of each other?" "Oh, it kind of looks like a snowman." And modeling that and sometimes children will imitate it. Or they'll say, "Well I'm making a car." Really then that really opens the door for the parent and the child to really talk about that creative moment that they're having.

And then another way is using familiar materials in unfamiliar ways. Creating – We can create novelty with that. Maybe the bowl in the picture becomes a hat in my pretend play scenario. Or maybe as simple as we're out in the community on a nature walk and we find some fun things on our walk like leaves and sticks and acorns. And we come home and make an art project out of it.

Roselia: Yeah, and a couple more things that you may want to consider when it comes to getting creative with what you have, is helping parents to really think about the use of materials that are going to appeal to all the different senses. Help parents to think about those materials that they have within the home that are going to like tap into touch, sight, taste, smell, and hearing. For example, using like spices and like plastic containers. Those little holes poke through there through the lids. Or even flowers. This is going to encourage the child to use their sense of smell. And then things like music can appeal to a sense of hearing. And then, of course, materials that can be safely eaten. They can make those connections to taste, like using different fruits and vegetables and even different things like pickles and lemons just to kind of stimulate that sense of taste. And then it creates an opportunity also to learn some new

language to help a child express what it is they're feeling. Or what it might taste like when they're doing something like a pickle or a lemon for example.

And then, we really want to emphasize the importance of knowing that the children are really unique. And they're going to learn in different ways. One of these senses might be something more that they prefer, but we really want to encourage just kind of the use of all the different senses. And then another approach, and Ashley kind of has been talking about this a little bit is asking those reflective questions instead of just praising the child. This is an area in which as a home visitor, you can really model and support how parents are giving children that positive feedback on their efforts and how this may encourage the child to engage in creative activities in the future. Here's an example of how this might look during your home visit. The child could be like hard at work and creating a castle with some like homemade blocks that they have there, different sizes. Then the parent, they finish kind of their artwork, and they get the parents attention. And the parent says, "That's amazing, Johnny, well done." To support the child's creativity you can model asking some of those reflective questions about what the child has done.

For an example, you could acknowledge again and praise Johnny for the wonderful creation that he has made. And you can say in addition to that praise, you can say something like "You spent a lot of time making this castle, and it's really paid off. I notice that you were – when you were making it, you first started by sorting the blocks into different piles. Why did you do that?" Or "What was the hardest part about making this castle? Who is going to live in the castle?" Those are some prompting questions that are going to get the child to reflect on their learning process and then to share some of those things. And by modeling this, you're also supporting the parents process in developing that ability to ask those reflective questions and extend that learning.

Ashley: OK, we're going to pause here. And we're going to watch a little video clip from a home visit. You see some questions on the screen here. This is an opportunity. You can use that participant's guide that Roselia referred to at the beginning of our webinar today, or if it's not available to you, maybe just a little piece of paper. Get a pen out. And while you're watching, just jot down ideas that you see are examples of what the adult is saying or doing. What the child is saying or doing. And then also jot down some examples of some home visiting practices you see, because hint, hint there might be a quiz for that. Without further ado, I'm going to play our video.

[Video begins]

Diana: Today, we planned building with boxes. I noticed the previous home visit the child – we had an activity where she was stacking some caps. And I said, "Well, we can definitely encourage that the next following home visit to build."

On top?

Mother: Five.

Diana: And to also support her social, emotional development, we're playing together, socializing together with other people. And then this is an activity she can take and do it with her siblings and mom and dad, even nana can – they can engage and support child to take turns. And she likes counting, so they continue doing that.

Child: One, two, three

Diana: This activity encourages the kids in four different ways – counting to take opportunities to play with other kids, and when mom and daddy to play, taking turns, and to solve a problem. If she's unable to place them all on top, we can help her and wanting her to persist, to continue doing it.

Previous visits, we have been working on just passing toys to one another. Me to mom, mom to me. Me to child, mom to child. And so on. We had noticed that the child keep offering a toy to her or me and mom will also say, "Give it to Diana," or "It's me, my turn," or simple words like that. Before, she would just keep it close to her. Today was more intentional. It's in those words – "My turn, your turn."

Mother: Your turn.

Child: My turn

Diana: We encourage her to interact, be able to maybe enter a group of other children or play with other children.

Mother: Wow. My turn. Can I do it?

Diana: Have you noticed her having any opportunities at home? Passing a toy? Passing a candy?

Mother: I remember for the first time, it was hard. But now she's like kind of letting it go.

[Video ends]

Roselia: All right, we did mention a little quiz. Reflecting on what you just saw in the video, which home visiting practices do you think were used? Here's your different options. We're going to push that poll out in just a second. But we want you to take a look at these options here. There's brainstorm how to use objects in new ways. There's help parents understand the creative process in their child. There is brainstorm which household items are good for pretend play. And then your last option is ask parents what they may have observed in their child doing that display use of creativity.

With that said, let's go ahead and push out the poll. You should have the poll up on your screen now, hopefully. OK. We're getting some responses coming in. And we've got 50% at help parents understand the creative process in their child. And ask parents what they may have observed their child doing that display – that displayed use of creativity. Yeah. Actually, the other option too, which is one of the practices that we kind of saw in that video there, is also

brainstorming how to use the objects in new ways. As you noticed they were using blocks that were made out of boxes. Those were some of the practices that we saw there. Thanks for participating in that.

Ashley: I wanted to take this opportunity too, to point out another resource, the Effective Practice Guides. We provided the link in your participant resource list. It's there. But these practice guides, it's framed to use the "no, see, do" process. No refers to the knowledge about a specific practice. See or you know, see it in action and then try it out yourself. These are specific to home visiting practices that you can use during home visits or socializations. And if you're ever wondering, "Where can I find home visiting practices?" you can look at effective practice guides and they can also be found in that resource we shared earlier, the ELOF@Home app.

You heard Roselia and I talking about different opportunities, providing opportunities for creativity. And I want you to look at this picture here. It looks like a dad and his two children, maybe building a fort. And just in the Q&A, I want to be curious and find out what examples do you see, or opportunities for creativity do you see in this picture?

I see going back to that fine motor example. Both the children have a pencil. Maybe they're drawing their plan. Oh Victoria, light play, I love that. Turn off the lights and use a flashlight. Building, drawing. It looks like they're using chairs to build a tent. There must have been some planning. Maybe some story telling. I love all these ideas. Keep that in mind because we're going to watch another short video clip focused on building forts. And I'm going to play that now. They're all great ideas.

[Video begins]

[Music]

Children: It's time for play!

Beth: Oh, hi, there. My name's Beth. And today, we're going to be talking about the magical secret worlds that children and adults alike can create by building forts. Think back to your own childhood. Did you ever build a fort? What did it feel like to be hunkered down inside? What did you use to make it? I remember the thrill of having my own secret spaces as a little girl. I use sheets and couch cushions and pretty much attach it to anything I could find. Then I'd add some pillows and books inside and had that private space all to myself. Now I get to help my toddler build her own forts, which she loves to call bear dens. We usually just prop up a few couch cushions and put a sheet overhead. It's simple, but wonderful. Sometimes she invites me in to snuggle and maybe even read a book or two. But often, she wants that cozy space all her own. And that's OK.

One of the great things about building forts is that you already have everything you need at home. You can use close pins or binder clips or bag clips from your kitchen to attach the roof to some cushions or to some furniture. You might try popping open an umbrella, putting a sheet

over top, some pillows and blankets inside, for a cozy space that's a little less work. Same goes for just throwing a big blanket over a table. Or give your kids a great big cardboard box and some crayons and markers and let them design it however they'd like. Outside, you might use some logs and some branches or even snow.

Building forts is an integral and natural part of children's play. Children build seam skills as they choose materials to test their ideas and build and create. The sheets and couch cushions and those binder clips and clothes pins, all of those are technology or tools. Constructing the fort is a lesson in engineering. Now, building forts can be messy, but I urge you to let go of the mess a little bit. It's nothing that can't easily be cleaned up. And remember to follow your child's lead. Younger children are likely going to need a little more support than older children, who might just want to build by themselves. Ask questions. You might ask, should we use this light sheet or this heavy blanket for the roof? Let them experiment and decide.

If they choose that heavy blanket and the roof collapses, talk to them about why. Remember, children are learning just as much from their successes as they are from their mistakes. Research shows that building forts nurtures children's imagination and their creativity. Building forts can be anything children imagine them to be. That might be a castle, a cabin, or even a bear den. Children get to decide who comes into the space, what they want to do inside, and what they should bring in.

[Video ends]

Roselia: Ashley, I think you're on mute.

Ashley: See. I told you I'd do it, Roselia. We just wanted to show an example of a video. That video is from the ECLKC "It's Time for Play" series. And this is another great resource. You can share this on a home visit with families to help them brainstorm ideas for some of this creative play opportunities that we've talked about. Researchers talk about different types of play in these videos, type of – Sorry, different types of play-based learning and ways that adults can encourage children through their play. You see there are different play topics listed on this slide that you could explore with families.

Roselia: Yeah, and again, I love all those videos, too. And they do offer a lot of information that you can utilize these for your own purpose as well as to share with family. We do hope that you – If you're not familiar with them, we do encourage you to check those out. We're going to go ahead and keep moving forward just so that we can kind of get through this next portion. Because we do want to talk a little bit about STEAM.

Ashley: Yeah. And the woman in that video actually kind of started talking about STEAM, relating building forts to STEAM. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. And this involves observing, questioning, testing ideas, and creating. We talked about creating being a process, try things out. And really, I think we hear this term STEAM, and it can fit – sound like a scary word. Especially if you know science wasn't your subject in school. But

really helping parents to re-think the way that they think of STEAM. It's really a tool to help children understand and explore the world around them.

You could do this. You could help parents to think about what skills have you used today? What STEAM skills have you used? In the Q&A, you can answer, maybe think about some things, parts of your day where maybe you have used STEAM. I know making my coffee this morning, that was technology. In the old days they had to roast their own beans and crunch it up. But we have technology that – I still actually grind my own beans – but if you don't want to grind your beans, we have technology that does that for you. And then the coffee itself. This is a good question to maybe ask families. I see cooking. Cooking is a great STEAM activity. And you can be so creative with cooking. This is a question you could ask a family on their home visits to just kind of think about that. Because that will really help support incorporating it into part of their day. When they realize they're already doing it? Making smoothies, lots of cooking.

I'm going to ask a question here if you can see, I'm holding up a pen. Maybe I'll hold up a marker. Because that's a little more visually appealing. Is this technology? This marker here? And the answer is yes. Technology refers to anything that's human made or not. Not just cell phones, cars, televisions. It can be as simple as a marker or a pen. Engineering is using materials, designing, problem solving, building structures. Back to that fort making. Again, parents can be curious during that moment. Ask their children, “OK you want to build a fort. Well, what materials do we have that we could build the fort?” Rather than saying, like we have pillows and blankets here. You know help them think and plan. And then we have arts. Sensory, exploration play, drawing, painting.

And then math. And math can be really fun. I mean math can be sorting laundry. Helping children sort the colors of their laundry or spatial sense. When you're putting dinner away at night. I saw a lot of cooking examples. Getting out two different Tupperware jars and asking you know “These are our leftovers, which one do you think will fit?” And that really can support that spatial sense development.

I know I said that STEAM can be intimidating. But again, thinking, helping parents think about most likely they're already using STEAM in their everyday lives. And the purpose of using it, the importance of it, the why is to really understand that it's really helping children to explore their world around them and make sense of it.

Roselia: Yeah. With that, we wanted to highlight a great resource that can really help support your work as you're trying to work with parents on understanding. Because it can be overwhelming when you talk about science and technology and engineering. Terms like that could be really intimidating. The materials from the STEAM 15-Minute In-Service Suite – and we do have these listed on your resource list – these can be used to help parents and families unleash their imagination and their creativity. It includes some really great handouts to help parents make that STEAM connection at home. For instance, this one here is a STEAM All-Around handout. And you can – I'm sure you can think of families that may not know where to start when it comes to STEAM. You can use this handout as an activity to help brainstorm with

parents about areas in the home – materials that they may have within that home, that they can use to support them in promoting learning and the different STEAM domains.

And then this in-service suite also includes a "Speak the Language of STEAM" handout. And this handout, it includes ideas that you can include in your conversation with parents on ways that they could encourage their child's inquiry, their reflection, their ability to problem solve. And then finally, there's also "It's OK To Be Curious" handout. We all have families that are probably looking for some ideas to get things going when it comes to STEAM. This handout has those ideas, and it also includes how parents can explore materials in new and different ways. Anywhere, and then throughout the day with their children. Again, these handouts are included as links on your resource list within that participant's guide.

All right. Let's see here. We're going to go ahead and move on over here. And let's talk a little bit about outdoor play.

Ashley: Thanks, Roselia. There's actually a lot of research out there that when we are outside in nature – and this includes children – it really has a lot of mental health benefits. It gives them a chance to explore their senses. They're touching, seeing, smelling, hearing. Sometimes tasting things whether we like it or not. But they learn how to solve problems in the world around them. This handout provides some really great, easy ideas that you could share with parents. And then parents can choose one thing to explore with their child. Follow their child's lead, let them choose, and then incorporate that into part of their day when they are outside with their child.

Roselia: Great. As we begin to wrap up our session today, we do have a couple more resources that we want to highlight with you. We want to point out the ECLKC. Many of the resources that we provided on the resource list that is included in your participant's guide are from the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center or ECLKC. This is the official website of the Office of Head Start. And it provides the latest research as well as research-based information, training materials, as well as resources that respond to the needs of Head Start and Early Head Start programs. I just wanted to mention that. And then also at the beginning of the session, we talked about, if you did miss any of the first three episodes on this domain of approaches to learning, this is PushPlay on demand. This is where you can go back, and you can rewatch one or all of the webinars. We wanted to make sure that you were aware of that. It is – It's easy to navigate. And then also want to mention that if you do go back and watch one of the webinars, it also includes certificates of completion. Wanted to make sure you were aware of that resource.

And then lastly, if you are not already a member of the MyPeers home visiting community, we do encourage you to join this networking opportunity. This is really a space and a place to share ideas, to ask questions of your peers. Share resources and just to really stay connected with other home visitors across the country. Currently, we have over 800 members. We do encourage you, if you're not already a part of the community, to make that connection. And then here is the information on the individualized professional development portfolio, or IPD. This is where you can find a lot of different professional development opportunities, including

the leave the bag challenge that we mentioned earlier, as well as perhaps if you are new in your role as your home visitor. There are things such as the beginning home visitor series. Just wanted you to be aware of that. Many of the courses do offer certificates of completion as well as CEUs, or continuing education units. I wanted to make sure that you were aware of that. And then hopefully, we did get to all of your questions during our session today. If we did not, we do encourage you to visit that MyPeers home visiting community where we can continue the conversation there.

This concludes the time that we have together for our session today. This is the last home visiting webinar for the 2021-2022 season. If you missed the February webinar, we will be rebroadcasting that session coming on June the 8th, so stay tuned for that. And we will see you in the fall for a new season of webinars for the home visitor series. Ashley, we appreciate you joining us today and sharing your knowledge and your expertise, and we do hope to have you back in our webinar series for future discussions. With that, we thank you for joining us today.

Ashley: Thank you. I was happy to do it.

Roselia: Great. All right, bye, everyone.

Ashley: Bye.