



September 7, 2023

## Fostering Inclusive Play for All Preschoolers

### Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide gives you ideas for creating inclusive play environments for all preschool-aged children. The reflection questions and activities will help you think about ways to support inclusive play. 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.
- **Kids explore more** and remember what they learned during play longer than what they learn from direct instruction.
- **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.
- **Play boosts creativity, helps build relationships, and supports physical and mental health.**



National Center on

Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

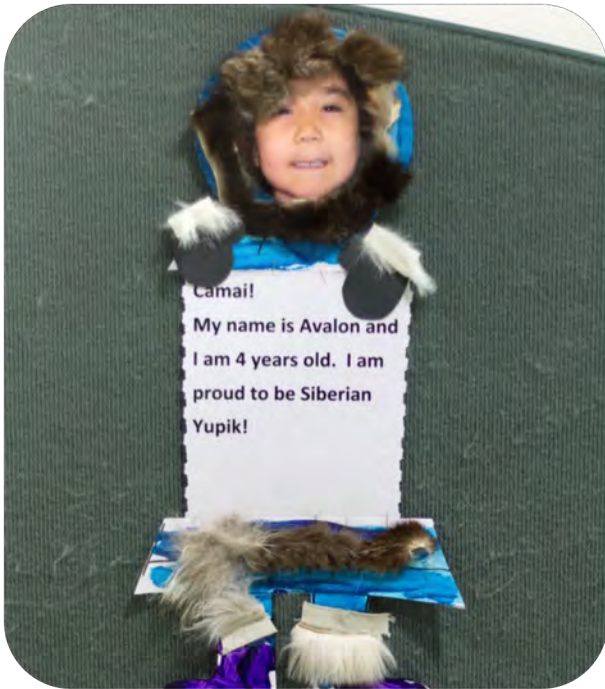
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## Reflection: Inclusive Play

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 toward 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 are 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 families open-ended questions to learn more about how they view play for more insight.

### Try it Out!

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

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 that children can access materials independently, walkways are clear, and there is ample space for active/gross motor activities. Are there areas for active play and areas for calm?
- **Social Accessibility:** Children thrive in warm, caring relationships with peers and adults. Education staff can model caring invitations to play or structure small group play, which has been shown to support the development of children who are dual language learners and/or children with disabilities.
- **Cognitive Accessibility:** Ensure your educational setting reflects the interests and cultural backgrounds of your children like the foods they eat at home, activities that are relevant to them and their families, and images/materials (e.g., dolls) of people who look like them.

## Risky Play for All



### 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. Find opportunities to use risky play to support IEP goals for children with disabilities using the coordinated approach with disability services coordinators, families, and other involved professionals.

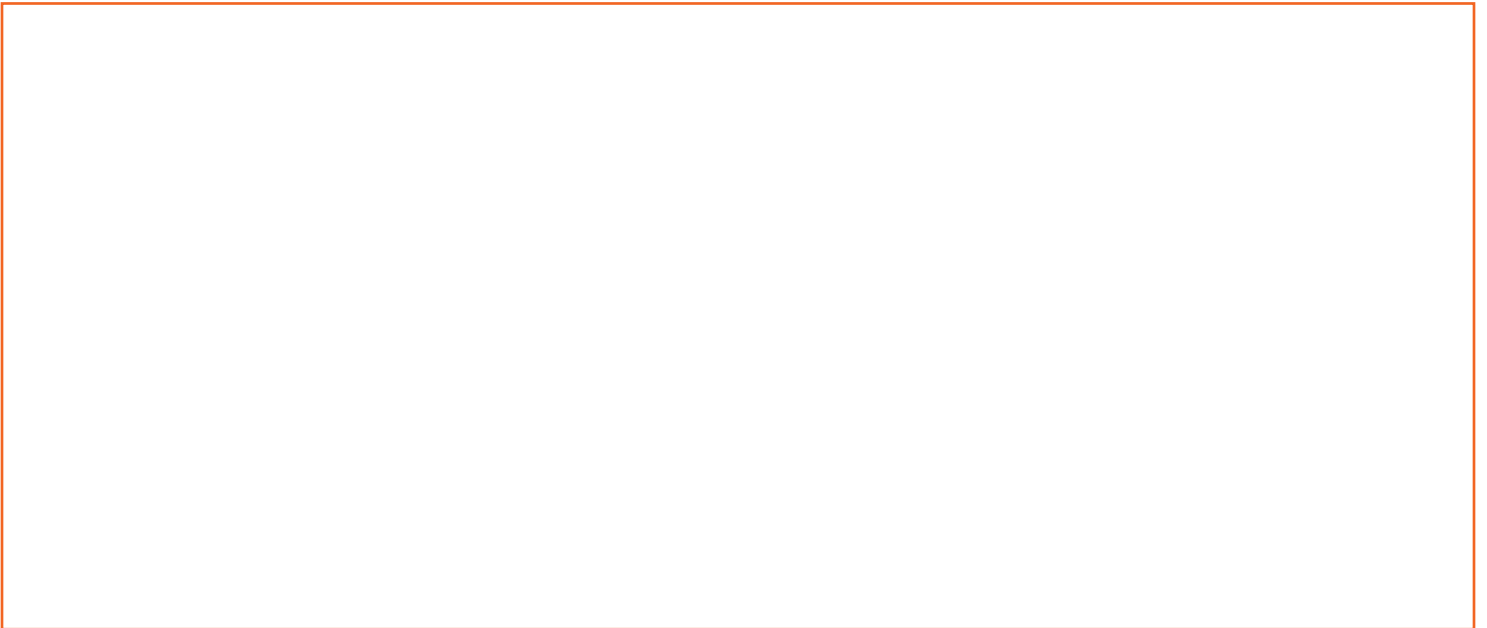


## Reflection: Risky Play

**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 (e.g., 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

- **Offer meaningful play:** 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.
- **Support 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 as well as families 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.

## Observation and Conversation

### Observation

What are the most/least popular areas?

When *are* they engaged?

What are important themes?

### Facilitating Discussion

Use photos, videos, or drawings to reflect together.

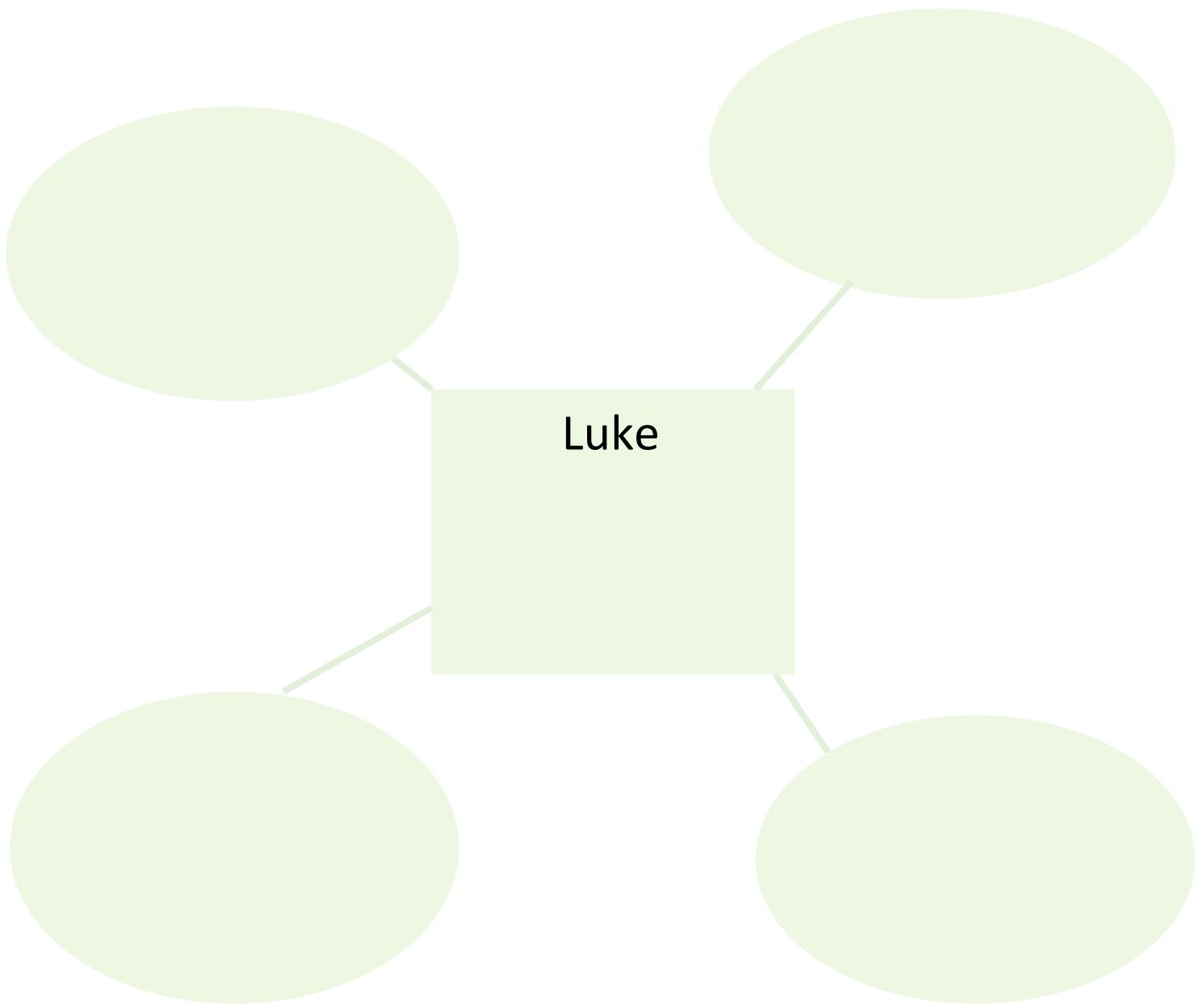
Talk about play intentions, feelings, and ideas.

Invite children to retell their play scripts.

## Try it Out!

### Video Observation and Planning Web

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# Helpful Resources (\*Resources Available in Spanish)

## Online Resources

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Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework\*

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

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>

Reflections on a Culturally Responsive Strength-based Approach

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/supporting-school-readiness-success-young-african-american-boys/reflections-culturally-responsive-strength-based-approach>

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 Promotes Early Development: It's Time for Play!

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/play-promotes-early-development-its-time-play>

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>

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>

Individualizing Instruction for Children with Disabilities Who Are Also Dual Language Learners

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/individualizing-instruction-children-disabilities-who-are-also-dual-language-learners>

Social Stories\*

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



## Webinars

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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: Preschool Play for Physical Development

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/preschool-play-physical-development>

Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement

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

Coordinated Approaches: Serving Children with Disabilities

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

Teacher Time Series: Preschool Inclusion and Belonging

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

- Inclusive Learning Environments for Preschoolers
- Learning Materials that Promote Inclusion for Preschoolers

Supporting Social and Emotional Learning for Children with Disabilities

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

Individualizing Instruction for Children with Disabilities Who Are Also Dual Language Learners

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/individualizing-instruction-children-disabilities-who-are-also-dual-language-learners>

Learning to Play and Playing to Learn in Home Environments

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/learning-play-playing-learn-home-environments>

Environments that Support High Quality Inclusion

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

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>

## Mobile Apps

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ELOF2GO Mobile App/MiELOF\*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elo2go-mobile-app>

Ready DLL Mobile App

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