

# TRI-STATE WEBINAR SERIES

## Autism in Early Childhood: Incorporating Play into the Natural Environment

Developed by: Lori Chambers, M.S., CCC-SLP, Lindy McDaniel, M.S.Ed, Teri McGill, M.A.Ed, and Katie Wells, M.Ed

Presented by: Lindy McDaniel MS Ed



## Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder Webinar Series



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## Presenter Information



Lindy McDaniel, MS Ed  
Early Childhood Coordinator  
TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports

## Polling Questions

- Interactive feature used throughout the webinar

What state are you from?

What state are you from?

Colorado

Kansas

Nebraska

Other

No Vote

What is your role?

What is your role?

Administrator

Parent/Family Member

Related Service Professional

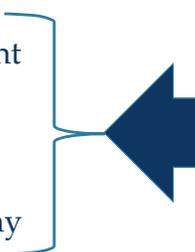
Teacher

Other

No Vote

## Presentation Summary

- This webinar is the fourth in a series of four for early childhood educators.
  - Part 1- Joint Engagement and Joint Attention
  - Part 2- Adult Engagement and Play Opportunities
  - Part 3- Teaching Object Based Play
  - Part 4- Playing in the Child's Natural Environment



NOTE: If you missed these presentations, you can find on our websites

## Learner Objectives

- Participants will learn strategies for moving structured play into the natural environment using a variety of visual supports.
- Participants will learn ways to structure common play items to increase purposeful play.
- Participants will develop an understanding of how to incorporate peers and friendship skills into structured play opportunities.

## Which of the following apply to teaching beginning play to children with Autism and other developmental disabilities?

- Using toys that are appealing and of interest
- Teaching engagement
- Teaching imitation
- Supplying an unlimited amount of toys
- Structuring the environment
- Using board games and puzzles of an academic nature
- Providing visual supports, work systems and/or task boxes
- Using reinforcement

## The answers . . .

- Children need to have the opportunity to practice **engagement** and **imitation**.
- Toys should be **appealing**, of **interest** and **reinforcing** to each individual child.
- The environment should be **structured** and organized in a way that makes sense to children, using **visual supports, work systems** and/or **task boxes**.

## What it Looks Like...



## A Closer Look at the House Center



## What if the visual structure and environmental organization are not enough?

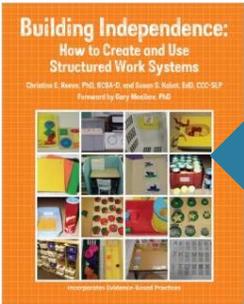
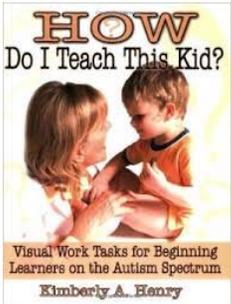
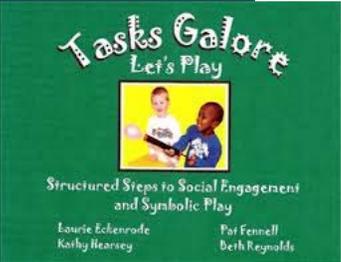


- Then staff can create task boxes specific to the area or the center.
- A task box is a box of materials a student can successfully complete because it has a clear beginning, middle and end.
- For example, when all the pieces are in the child knows they are finished.

## Sample Tasks for the House Center



An excellent resource for creating task boxes for play is. . .



Other great task box resources

A Closer Look at the Block Center and Circle Time Area



Visually Closing Centers  
September 2012

In what ways is the environment structured and how is staff supporting the students' engagement?



### A Closer Look at the Marble Game



Structured  
Play Activities  
July 2014

By incorporating highly preferred toys, children are more likely to engage, attend to the play activity for a longer amount of time, and possibly even play alongside their peers.



Play is not wasted instructional time.  
When thought out, play can incorporate pre-academic concepts such as colors, shapes, numbers and letters, as well as, social concepts such as turn taking, requesting help, following directions, and being a good friend!

-NAEYC, 2009



But what if the child has limited or no preferred interests or if their play is not safe and/or not a toy at all!



It may be developmentally appropriate. . .

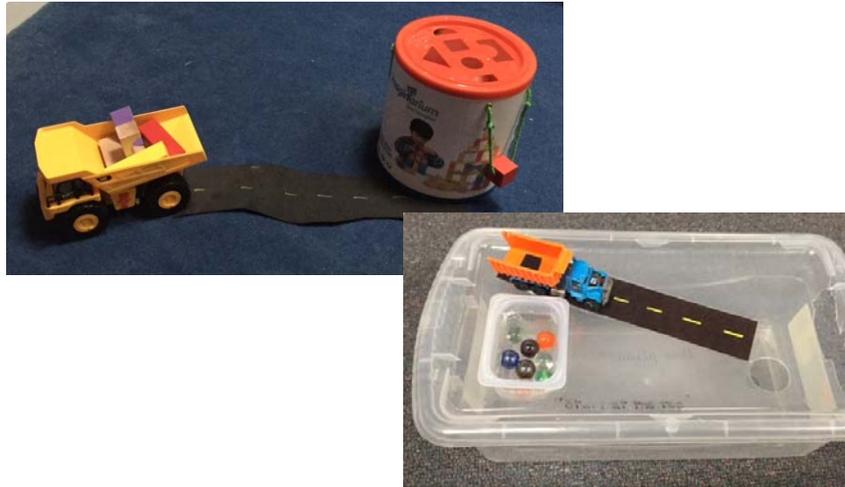


But how do we shape it to be classroom appropriate!

For Knocker Over-ers. . .



## For Dumpers. . .



## For Throwers or Kickers. . .



What skills are being taught in this video clip?



A closer look at the visual used to teach waiting and the puzzle used to practice.



Teaching can happen at a table.

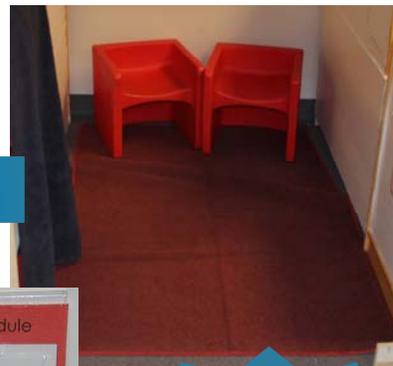


Direct  
Instructio  
Septemb  
2013

Or on the floor.

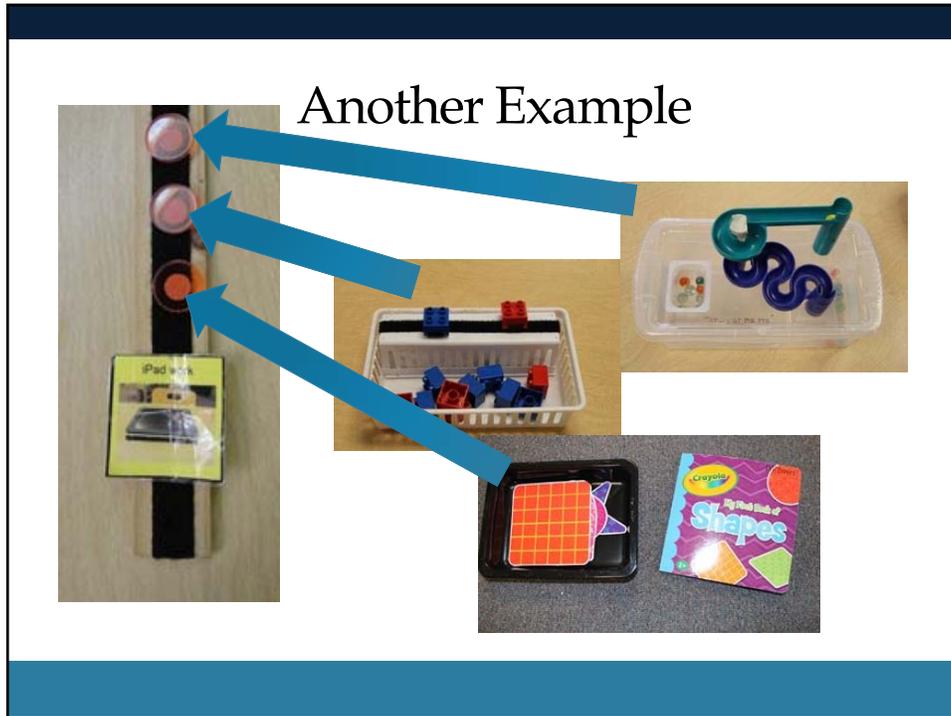


the work  
system



Social Schedule	
	1. pig box
	2. cow box
	3. chicken box
	4. horse box
	5. cat box
	6. dog box

Social Small  
Group  
March 2014



## Why Work Systems and Task Boxes?

- By organizing toys in task boxes and work systems, children can see a clear point to what they are playing with.
- They see a beginning and an end!
- The concept of play is complex.
- Children with Autism are often very rigid. They don't see the point of frivolous free play. By organizing play with a clear beginning, middle and end they see a point to the play and can be successful, and then later engage in open ended play.

A work system answers these 4 questions:

- How much work?
- What work?
- When is the work finished?
- What comes next?

Can this structure be incorporate in the home?

**ABSOLUTELY!**



In a family room



In a bedroom

## How does Natalie know when play is over?



## When is play over...



Play is over when  
all the books are in.



Play is over when  
all the crayons are in.

## Why is it important to teach and organize play?

Children who are unable to participate in play experiences are at risk for future deficits and have greater difficulty adjusting to school environments where individualized instruction is limited.

-Buysee, Wesley, Keyes and Bailey, 1996; Gallagher, 1997.



After students understand the toys and games in a controlled teaching setting, items can be moved for access during exploratory play and center time.



## What is the goal of all the hard work (play)?

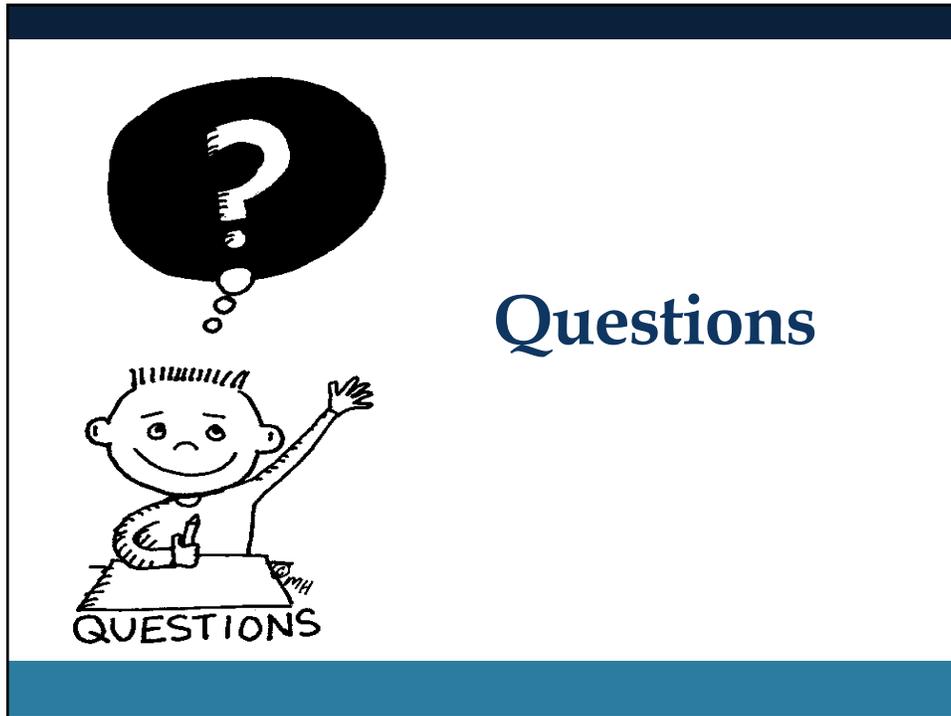


So children can socialize and play independently with their peers!



## Summary

- The environment should be structured and organized in a way that makes sense to children, using visual supports, work systems and/or task boxes.
- To support children in gaining skills use appealing toys, items of interest, and reinforcers.
- Stay in the game! Model play and engage in playful experiences to teach new skills.



## Resources

Bailey, B.A. (2000). *Conscious discipline*. Loving Guidance: Oviedo, FL.

Bailey, B.A. (2000). *I love you rituals*. Loving Guidance: Oviedo, FL.

Benchaaban, D., Endo, S., Morrison, R., and Sainato, D. (2002). Increasing play skills of children with Autism using activity schedules and correspondence training. *Journal of Early Intervention*.

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**THANK YOU!**

Lindy McDaniel  
[lindym@tasnatbs.org](mailto:lindym@tasnatbs.org)

