

Section 6: Gee Whiz and Your Day



The Gee Whiz Foundation **The Importance of Free & Guided Play** **Gee Whiz & Your Daily Schedule**

Gee Whiz - A Foundation

Just as any house needs a strong foundation, so does an educational program. At Gee Whiz, that is our goal ... to provide you with a curriculum that provides that strong foundation and yet, encourages and invites you to create the "house" upon which that foundation stands. As an educator, it is your role and responsibility to build upon the experiences provided in the Gee Whiz curriculum to make it "your own." Doing this enables you to address the unique interests and needs of the children in your group. This is so important! If you need more guidance on how to individualize the Gee Whiz curriculum, please see Section 2 of this guide (pages 11-22).



Comprehensive Coverage of 10 Developmental Areas & Links to Skills

At Gee Whiz, we work hard to ensure that the experiences we provide in the curriculum incorporate all 10 developmental areas for your group. Further, we link those areas to more specific skills. How? Here's a short explanation:

1. ALL Gee Whiz experiences contain picture codes. These picture codes denote the developmental areas addressed by the experience. For instance, if you see the ♪ symbol, you know that the experience addresses Science Knowledge. If you see the ? symbol, you know it addresses Logic & Reasoning.
2. We then take things a step further and connect those learning areas to specific skills or, as we call them at Gee Whiz, Learning Indicators (see p. 35-36 of this guide for details). In the back of EACH Teaching Guide, you will find a chart. That chart details the specific skills each experience addresses. This makes it easy for you to "connect the dots" while also documenting specific skills each child works on during each Gee Whiz experience.
3. Finally, the Gee Whiz curriculum is NOT designed to be a full day curriculum or an "end all." As you will see in the next few pages, it is designed to incorporate just a part of your day. Children need time for free play (both inside & out) as well as book time, nap time, meals and other routines every day.

The Importance of Play

Play. It must be a part of your daily routine every single day. Not only that, children need free play time both inside and out. Free play is a time when children make choices, think “outside the box,” engage with other children and so much more. Free play helps children build skills in many areas AND is an excellent time for you to observe and record anecdotal notes. (For more information on this topic, please see pages 14-17 of this guide). Recent research supports the idea that both free play and guided play are important elements in any early childhood program. Do you know the difference?

Free play is...

- Fun! Children love to play and it brings them joy
- Happens without any adult intervention
- All about the process. The end result often times does not matter.
- Spontaneous
- Engaging ... on many levels (physical, emotional, social, intellectual)

EXAMPLE: A child is playing on the slide and exclaims, “I am Super Kid and I am going to save the dog that is caught in the fence.” (Of course, there is not a dog caught in the fence... LOL).

Here is a great article about free play. We encourage you to read it: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/06/summertime-playtime>



Guided play is...

- Setting up the environment by providing materials children can use during free play that reinforce the curriculum
- Engaging with children by asking open-ended questions as they play
- Commenting on children’s discoveries as they play
- Scaffolding children’s learning by encouraging further exploration
- Sometimes, joining in as a co-player with the child directing you!

EXAMPLE: Adding plastic dinosaurs to the block area during a unit on dinosaurs.

Here is a great paper explains the importance of guided play. We encourage you take time to read it: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2017/case-brain-science-guided-play>

Guided Play & Gee Whiz

Recently, more and more research is pointing to the positive impact guided play can have on young children (see article noted on p. 60). Guided play is written into the Gee Whiz curriculum. While we cannot “plan” free play time, we can give you tools to help you make the most of guided play experiences. Here are a few ways the Gee Whiz curriculum achieves this goal.



Add & Enhance:

This component is included with each Gee Whiz unit. It contains suggested materials to add to your learning areas/centers (both inside and out) that reinforce the current unit. Use this as a tool to set up the environment for guided play. This list is merely a starting point. Please add other materials that reinforce the unit that you believe your children would enjoy using. Try to add some to each of the areas if at all possible.

Open-Ended Questions - Built Right In

At Gee Whiz, we believe that asking open-ended questions as children engage in both adult-directed and child-directed experiences is extremely important. You will find suggested open-ended questions to ask with each Gee Whiz experience (except those for infants). Asking these questions provides you with the opportunity to also scaffold the children’s learning and build upon their interests.

Experiences, Experiences, Experiences:

Many of the Gee Whiz experiences are designed to be child-directed. Your role (as in guided play) is to set up the environment by providing materials from which children can choose. For instance, we might suggest painting with circular objects including jar lids, plastic cups, small plastic bowls, plastic water bottles, etc. In this example, you would set up the art area with these materials as well as paint-soaked sponges or paint in shallow dishes. The children would then decide how to use these materials. As you observe, you would ask open-ended questions and also capture upon this opportunity to talk about the circle shape with those children who are ready. You will find these types of experiences throughout the Gee Whiz curriculum.

Establishing a Daily Schedule

Children thrive on routines. Establishing a daily schedule is extremely important for many reasons. First, it helps children learn to anticipate, "what comes next." Having a routine provides the consistency that young children need. Second, it provides you with the opportunity to balance your day. Finally, establishing a daily schedule is important because it helps you achieve the goal of addressing all areas of development.

One the next two pages, you will find two daily schedules. One is a sample of what your schedule might look like (including the use of the Gee Whiz curriculum) and the other is a blank schedule that you can print out and complete based on your own individual needs.

When planning your daily schedule, keep these things in mind:

- Include a balance of active & quiet time experiences
- Include free play time - both inside and outside. Remember...free play is exactly that...free! No planning required!
- Make sure you build in time for routines such as toileting, handwashing, napping, eating, clean up, etc. All of these activities take time!
- Keep arrival and departure times flexible and open-ended. Children will be arriving and departing a different times.
- Be flexible! Some days your day will not go as planned and that is OK. Also, if the children get very involved in an experience, give them time and adjust accordingly for the rest of the day.
- If you have school-age children, you will need to add in time for bus stop pick-up/ drop off + experiences for them as well.



Sample Daily Schedule

Here is an example of a daily schedule that might work for your family child care program if you've chosen to use Gee Whiz as your curriculum. It is very important to keep the needs of your group in mind when planning your daily schedule. Different ages have different needs. Schedules are important because young children find comfort in knowing, "what comes next." A good schedule also includes time for caring for basic needs such as toileting, handwashing, eating and rest. There should also be a balance between active and quiet experiences, as well as indoor and outdoor play (both free and guided).

6:30 - 7:30 Arrival/Self-Directed Free Play

7:30 - 7:45 Clean-up/Handwashing

7:45 - 8:15 Breakfast

8:15 - 8:30 Handwashing/Toileting/Diapering

8:30 - 9:00 Gee Whiz Exploring Together Experience *(include infants if they are awake)*

9:00 - 9:45 Gee Whiz Small Group Activities + Free Choice Play

9:45 - 10:00 Cleanup/Handwashing

10:00 - 10:15 Snack

10:15 - 11:15 Outdoor Free Play

11:15 - 11:30 Diapering/Toileting/Handwashing

11:30 - 11:45 Story Time - Read to the children every day!

11:45 - 12:00 Handwashing/ Get Ready for Lunch

12:00 - 12:30 Lunch (Don't forget to sit and talk with the children!)

12:30 - 12:45 Diapering/Toileting/Handwashing/Brush Teeth 🦷

12:45 - 2:45 Nap Time

2:45 - 3:00 Wake up/Diapering/Toileting/Handwashing

3:00 - 3:30 Snack

3:30 - 4:30 Indoor Free Play and/or Outdoor Free Play *(You could also finish any Gee Whiz experiences you did not get done in the morning and/or repeat those children enjoyed so they can extend their learning)*

4:30 - 4:45 Toileting/Diapering/Handwashing

4:45 - 5:00 Story Time - Read, Read, Read!

5:00 - 6:30 Pick-Up - Free Play until Parents/Caregivers Arrive



