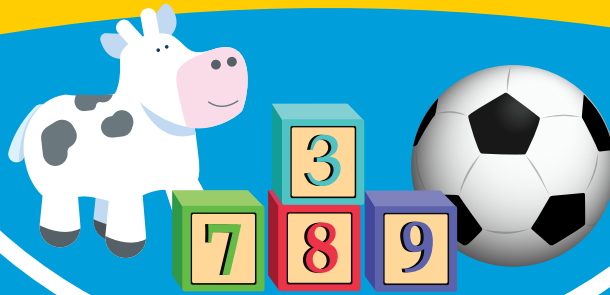


the GENIUS of
PLAYTM
.....
It's more than play!

NATIONAL
AfterSchool
ASSOCIATION

Play Ambassador



PROGRAM TOOLKIT

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THE GENIUS OF PLAY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The National Afterschool Association and **The Genius of Play™** are excited to welcome you to the Play Ambassadors Program, a unique leadership opportunity designed for select NAA members to share the message about the value of play with other afterschool professionals, families and communities.

As a Play Ambassador, you will receive access to the latest research, expert tips, and more about how play helps youth develop social, emotional, cognitive, physical, communicative and creative skills used throughout their lives. You have been chosen to help us share the information, educate others and influence afterschool programs, communities and kids through play!

AS A GENIUS OF PLAY AMBASSADOR, YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO:

- 1 **host three events**
- 2 **post to social media**
- 3 **write a reflection report of your Ambassador year**

You will find details on these requirements throughout the kit.



MISSION STATEMENTS

THE GENIUS OF PLAY MISSION

[The Genius of Play](#) is a movement to raise awareness of play's developmental benefits and encourage families to play more.

The Genius of Play's website and social media channels provide families with the information and inspiration they need to make play an important part of their child's day. They help parents, teachers, and caregivers to keep playtime fun and fresh!

The Genius of Play's resources include facts, tips, play ideas, expert advice and more on how toys and play can help kids build confidence, creativity, critical thinking and other skills that will serve them throughout their lives.



THE NATIONAL AFTERSCHOOL ASSOCIATION MISSION

The National AfterSchool Association is the voice of the afterschool profession. We are the national membership organization for professionals who work with and on behalf of children and youth during out-of-school time.

NAA's mission is to promote development, provide education and encourage advocacy for the out-of-school-time community to further the afterschool profession.

We exist to inspire, connect and equip afterschool professionals.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

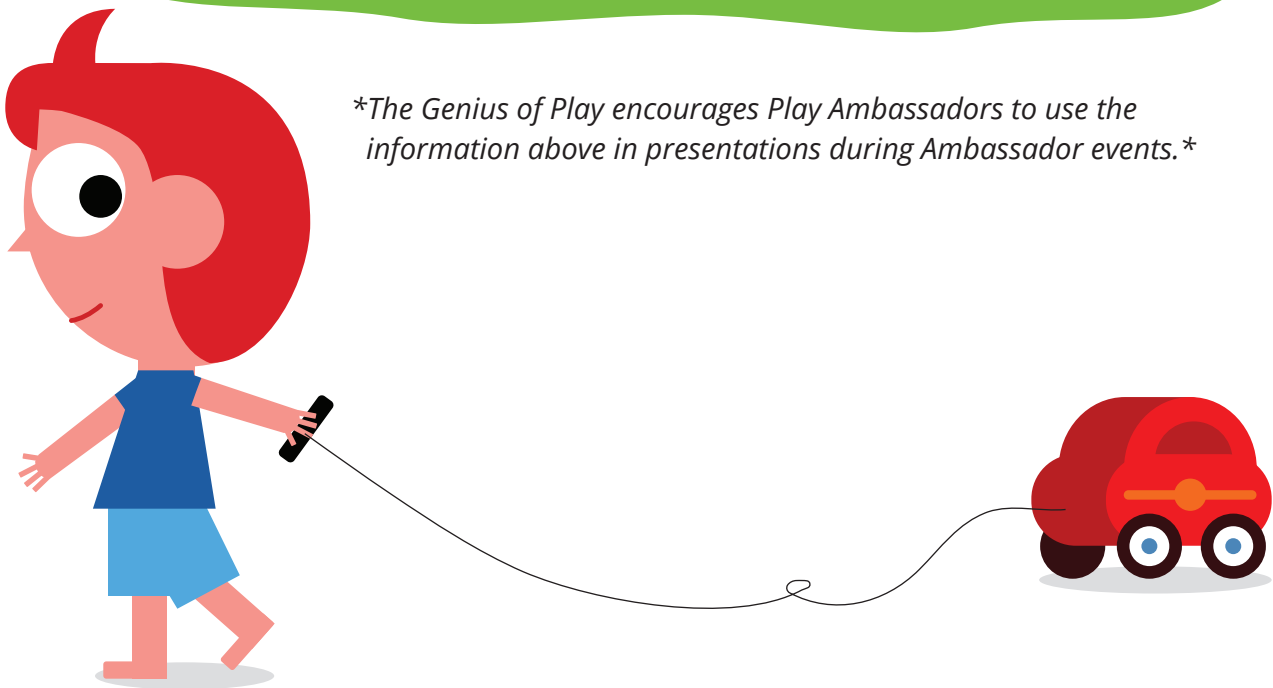
WHY DO WE NEED TO SPREAD THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY?

Today's kids play 8 hours less per week than the kids two decades ago.

SOME ALARMING STATS ON WHAT HAPPENS WHEN KIDS ARE DEPRIVED OF THEIR PLAYTIME...

- Lower academic performance
- Higher incidence of behavioral problems
- Too much time in front of a screen
- Higher levels of stress
- Higher levels of obesity
- Less mental agility
- Lower ability to cope
- Missing opportunities to learn how to share and be a team player

The Genius of Play encourages Play Ambassadors to use the information above in presentations during Ambassador events.



PLAY FACTS & STATS

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING PLAY INTO A CHILD'S DAY?

- Children with access to a variety of toys were found to reach higher levels of intellectual achievement, regardless of a child's gender, race or socio-economic status.
- Young children that played with building bricks had significantly higher language scores 6 month later, compared to a control group.
- 4 and 6-year old kids who were asked to perform boring tasks while dressed up as a superhero stayed on task longer.
- The more time children spend talking during pretend and imaginary play, the stronger their vocabulary is later in life.
- A study showed that 3rd graders who have 15+ minutes of recess every day behaved better in school than those with less.



HUNGRY FOR MORE RESEARCH?

Get shareable facts & infographics, play research and more at TheGeniusofPlay.org/assets.



The Genius of Play encourages Play Ambassadors to use the information above in presentations during Ambassador events.

KEY MESSAGES TO SPREAD (EVENT TALKING POINTS)



- 1 Although playing may seem simple, there are highly sophisticated scientific and evolutionary processes taking place as a result. **When play happens, significant neurological changes occur—creating new pathways within the brain.**
- 2 The absence of play may lead to the inability to properly cope with pain, fear, anxiety, and to cooperate with others. It may also cause a general lack of confidence.
- 3 **Toys are the tools of play.** Toys can enhance play value, guide learning, and engage a child in a stimulating, active way.

4

The Genius of Play has identified

6 KEY BENEFITS OF PLAY

that are crucial to healthy child development:



Improve Cognitive Abilities



Hone Communication Skills



Increase Creativity



Process & Express Emotions



Develop Physical Skills



Enhance Social Skills

The Genius of Play encourages Play Ambassadors to use the information above in presentations during Ambassador events.

KEY MESSAGES TO SPREAD (EVENT TALKING POINTS)

- 5 Through play, children **learn and practice a host of fundamental skills** they need for optimal development.
- 6 **Recess time is important** in many ways. (Schools with more recess show stronger academic performance.)
- 7 Children need a “**balanced diet of play.**” The mix of play—which should include active, free, imaginative, team, game, solitary, passive play and more—helps to build a well-rounded child.
- 8 Screen time can complement play if done correctly... It’s important to point out that tech toys play a role in the well-rounded development of children and teach many important concepts and skills. **Finding a balance between online and offline play is key.**
- 9 No matter how much time you can spare—5 minutes, 10 or 15, play is important to fit in every day. Facilitating free, open, unstructured play is a parent’s duty. They should provide kids with the time, space, and implements—then get totally out of the way.
- 10 The TheGeniusofPlay.org is a resource that everyone can use to get information on the [benefits of play](#), [expert tips on playtime](#), and hundreds of free, fun and simple [play ideas](#).



The Genius of Play encourages Play Ambassadors to use the information above in presentations during Ambassador events.

EVENTS

COMMUNITY PLAY EVENT

Audience:
Families

Goal of the event:
To host a playdate for kids and their families.

Why we need it:
Being playful, whether for a kid, a teen, or an adult, can involve any number of activities that allow to relax, laugh, de-stress, use imagination, learn new concepts, and build shared experiences and memories with friends and loved ones.

Tips for success:

- Be sure to promote your community play event and get rsvp's so you have enough playthings for all!
- Use a variety of types of play at the event, whether it be jump ropes, coloring sheets, puppets or board games, so kids can socialize and play in many different ways.
- Distribute the Genius of Play [handout](#) and [play idea sheet](#) at your community play event so everyone remembers to keep playing when the event ends.

Ambassadors must send all participant email addresses from the event to info@thegeniusofplay.org no later than three days after the event.

<p><i>the</i> GENIUS of PLAY[™] thegeniusofplay.org</p> <p>PLAY ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES — IT'S ALSO AN IMPORTANT TEACHING TOOL!</p>	<p>FLAG IN A SNOW STACK</p> <p>Tie a white piece of fabric to the end of a stick. Players can take turns hiding the "flag" within the agreed upon boundaries. Once it's well hidden, the search is on! Keep track of how long it takes from the group to find it. Whoever hid the flag that was the hardest to find wins!</p> <p>  </p> <p><small>*From Spoonful.com</small></p>	<p>FREEZE TAG</p> <p>A winterized version of tag. One player is chosen to be the "freezer" and two others are named "melters." Players must freeze in place when they are tagged by the freezer. The melters can unfreeze people by tagging them. Melters can't be frozen.</p> <p>   </p> <p><small>*From HealthUnit.com</small></p>
<p>JUMPING SNOW HURDLES</p> <p>Build several mounds of snow to make an obstacle course of hurdles that you can jump over while you play follow the leader! The higher you build the hurdles, the more challenging the game gets.</p> <p>  </p> <p><small>*From Spoonful.com</small></p>	<p>SNOW PAINTING</p> <p>Give your kids spray bottles full of water tinted with food coloring, and let them loose to paint the "white canvas" outside!</p> <p>  </p> <p><small>*From Spoonful.com</small></p>	<p>TIC-TAC-SNOW</p> <p>Trace the tic-tac-toe board in the snow, and use crisscrossed sticks and pinecones as game pieces!</p> <p>   </p>

EVENTS

COMMUNITY SEMINAR FOR ADULTS

Audience:

Parents, Caregivers

Goal of the event:

To educate caregivers about the importance of playtime for child development.

Why we need it:

Today's kids play 8 hours less per week than the kids two decades ago. This seminar is an important tool to remind adults who care for children of the necessity to give kids the opportunity to play

Tips for success:

- During the seminar, let adults know about the facts and stats about play.
- Distribute the Genius of Play [handout](#) and [play idea sheet](#) at your seminar.
- Point the audience to TheGeniusofPlay.org so they can get expert tips and ideas on how to play with the children in their lives.

Ambassadors must send all participant email addresses from the event to info@thegeniusofplay.org no later than three days after the event.



EVENTS

MEETING FOR AFTERSCHOOL FAMILIES

Audience:

Parents, Caregivers

Goal of the event:

To educate families about the importance of playtime for child development.

Why we need it:

Families want to spend quality time with their children, and children want their parents to play with them, but we know families are finding it difficult to find time.

Tips for success:

- At this meeting, remind parents of the importance of playtime and the benefits that it provides for children.
- Make sure to have playthings at the meeting for the kids in the room to be able to enjoy as the parents learn.
- Ending the meeting with a fun play game for the whole group is an enlightening way to get everyone in the room to laugh and remember to play.
- Don't forget to stress that TheGeniusofPlay.org is a website full of information to encourage and help guide families to play. The website includes play tips and ideas, expert advice, cool toy picks, and much more.

Ambassadors must send all participant email addresses from the event to info@thegeniusofplay.org no later than three days after the event.

The screenshot shows the homepage of TheGeniusofPlay.org. The header includes the logo, navigation links (6 Benefits of Play, Play Ideas & Tips, Expert Advice, Toy Time, Play Talk), a language selector (EN), and social media icons. The main content area features several articles and sections: 'BUILDING TOYS, BUILDING SKILLS' with a photo of two children playing with tools; 'It's More Than Play!' explaining the value of play; 'Does Your Child Get Enough Play?' with a quiz link; '6 Benefits of Play' with icons for physical and emotional benefits; 'Yummy Sensory Summer Fun!' with a recipe link; 'PLAY IDEAS' with a link to explore all ideas; 'PASS THE APPLE', 'LEAF IT TO ME', and 'ALPHABET APPLE TREE' as quick play ideas; 'Be In The Know' with expert advice and play talk links; 'For Teachers' with a link to start here; 'Toy Time' with a link to discover more; 'AGE-9Y-AGE TOY GUIDE' with a link to discover more; and 'COOL TOY PICKS' with a link to discover more. At the bottom, there is a 'Now That's Genius!' section with a link to stay in the know and a 'SIGNUP' button for an email newsletter.

EVENTS

WORKSHOP FOR COLLEAGUES

Audience:

Afterschool Professionals, Teachers & other School Staff

Goal of the event:

To educate colleagues about your Play Ambassadorship and provide them with resources to spread the information about the importance of play.

Why we need it:

Sharing the message about the value of play with other afterschool professionals and educators cannot be more important!

Tips for success:

- Touching on the facts about the importance of play is a great way to start the workshop.
- Make sure to provide your colleagues with Genius of Play resources, including [playful lesson plans](#), [easy play ideas](#), [expert tips](#) and more, so that they can implement playtime within their environments.
- Point the audience to TheGeniusofPlay.org/Teachers for even more resources.

Ambassadors must send all participant email addresses from the event to info@thegeniusofplay.org no later than three days after the event.

EMOJI BINGO

Make talking about your feelings fun by playing Emoji Bingo!

STEP 1. Cut out the emoji section on this page, and make copies. This is what you'll use to make your Bingo boards.

STEP 2. Paste the emojis onto old Bingo boards you already have, or print out Bingo templates from online. You can have your students help. Just be sure to place the emojis randomly on the boards.

STEP 3. Create a master set of ALL the emojis. We recommend laminating them. Put them into a jar to draw from.

STEP 4. Hand out the Bingo boards to your students, and give them little beans or other small items to mark the emojis off.

STEP 5. Have students take turns, drawing an emoji card from the jar. As they draw it and call it out to the class, take a moment to reflect. Have the student discuss the specific emotion and give a scenario of when they've felt this way. You might want to prompt them on how they've dealt with this emotion, too.

STEP 6. Keep playing Emoji Bingo until someone wins. Then clear the cards and start again. This is a great game to play over and over again because each student will view or talk about an emotion a little differently.






ACTIVITY #4:
Benefit: Process & Express Emotions
Focus Skills: Social-Emotional Learning


NATURE SCIENCE SCAVENGER HUNT

Kids love scavenger hunts. This one comes with a couple of twists because it gets students to focus on nature and the outdoors while also incorporating some yoga!

Here's how it works. Divide your class into groups, and then give them the list below. Upon discovery of each item, invite kids to take a picture of the item using a camera or iPad. Then they should also attempt to do a related yoga pose. For example, what would a spider yoga pose look like? A daisy! Once your students are back in the classroom, they should review their photos. Try to have them identify the items they discover, and discuss how they tie back to your natural sciences unit. Invite students to share the yoga poses they invented, too!

- Find a pinecone, berry, or another item from a tree
- Look for a sign of water
- Look for a small, beautiful detail from nature
- Discover a bug
- Find a flower
- Find 3 different types of leaves
- Look for a sign of an animal (tracks, markings, hair, etc.)
- Find two different cloud types
- Collect two different types of rock
- Find a sign of a bird (nest, feather, etc.)





ACTIVITY #5
Benefit: Develop Physical Skills
Focus Skills: Observation, Natural Science, Recording

SOCIAL MEDIA

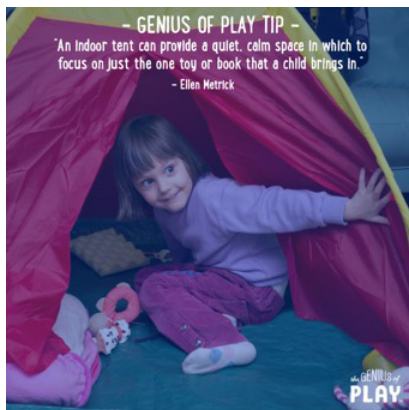
During the course of your Play Ambassadorship, we ask that you actively engage with The Genius of Play's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) from your social media channels and highlight the various events that you put on during the year.

To share the importance of play with an even greater audience, Play Ambassadors will be required to post imagery from each event on social media. Each event image should be posted with #GeniusofPlay.

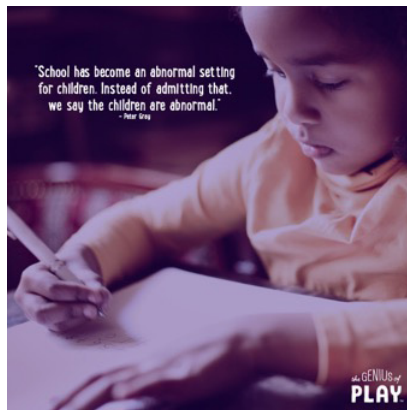
We also ask that you visit TheGeniusofPlay.org/assets and share any 10 images with #GeniusofPlay.



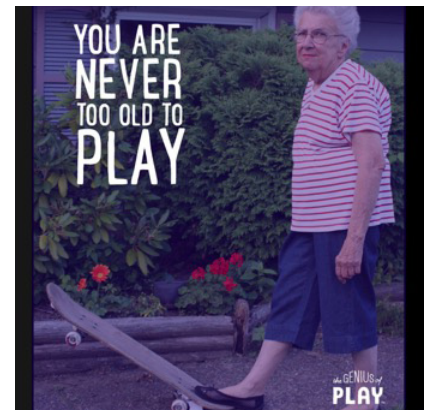
EXAMPLE POSTS



Not only does it help kids focus, playtime is just more fun inside a tent! Get more play tips at TheGeniusofPlay.org!
#GeniusofPlay



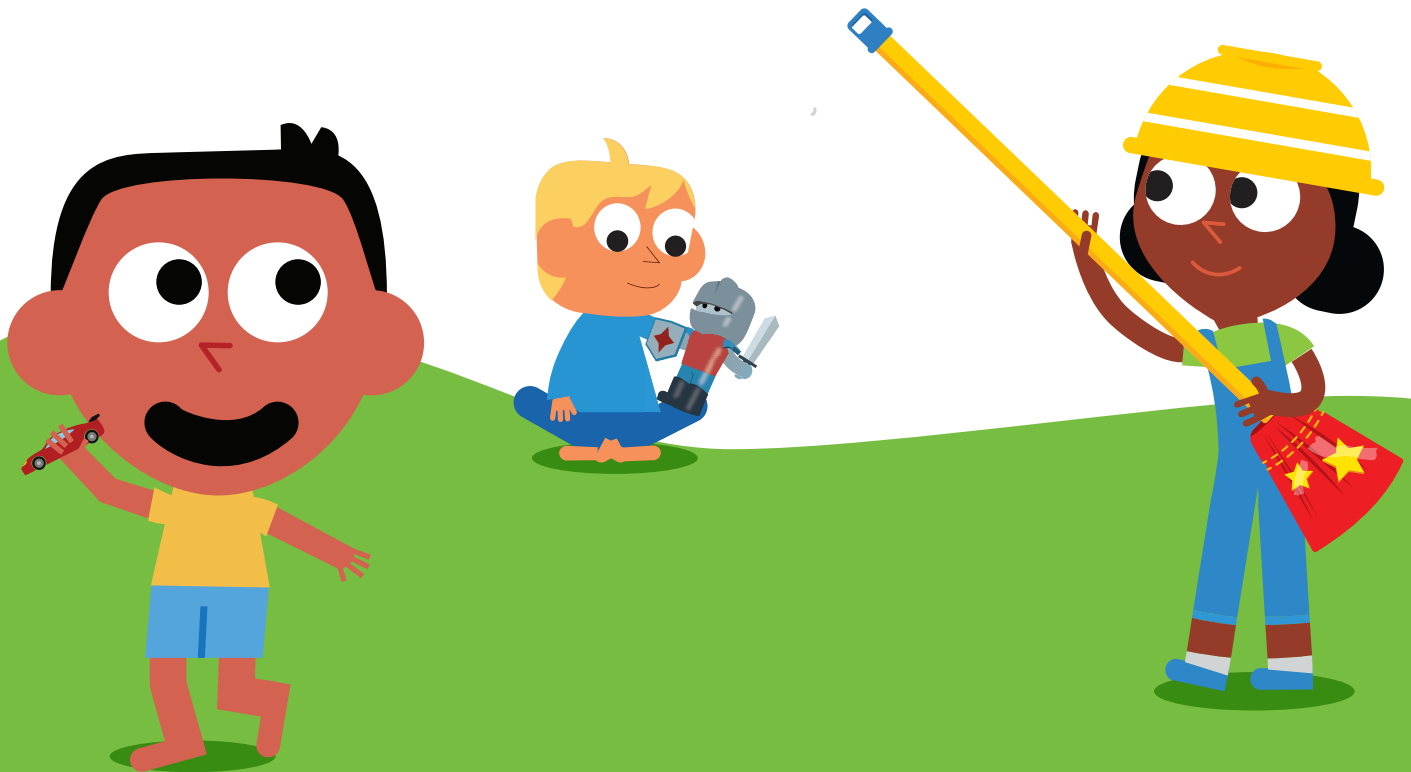
By having kids sit all day, are we hindering their potential? Learn about the benefits at TheGeniusofPlay.org!
#GeniusofPlay



It's the one thing that everyone 1-100 benefits from. Learn more at TheGeniusofPlay.org!
#GeniusofPlay

REFLECTION REPORT REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Recap the 3 Play Ambassador events that you did during the 2019–2020 school year. For each event, please note what you learned from the experience and what your attendees learned. Recaps should include a copy of the presentation given, handouts distributed, attendee count, and images from the event.
- 2 Do you feel that being a Play Ambassador helped encourage others to play more?
- 3 If you were to be a 2020–2021 Play Ambassador, what other tools or tips would be useful for you to reach and engage with your community?



READY TO USE TOOLS

[PLAY AMBASSADOR BADGE](#)

[EVENT INVITATION](#)

[PRESENTATION TEMPLATE FOR EVENTS](#)

[SUGGESTED PRESENTATION SLIDES](#)

[PLAY IDEA HANDOUT](#)

[THE GENIUS OF PLAY HANDOUT](#)



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