

Gail G. McGee, Ph.D., graduated from Auburn University, earning her degree in clinical psychology. She received postdoctoral training in autism and developmental disabilities at the Princeton Child Development Institute and the University of Massachusetts – Amherst.

Dr. McGee developed the Walden incidental teaching curriculum and founded the Walden Early Childhood Program at Emory University School of Medicine, where she served on the faculty, engaging in research, clinical care and teaching. Her research interests are focused on early autism intervention, incidental teaching and social behavior.

The Walden Early Learning Center was designed to help children with Autism learn through watching the behavior of their classmates. The program focus is on early intervention, beginning at 18 months and progressing to pre-kindergarten.

The focus is on enhancing the social and language development of children with Autism and typically developing children. Staff members facilitate social interactions between children with Autism and their classmates, allowing children diagnosed with Autism to learn from their typically developing peers. The typically developing children gain skills in problem solving, leadership and see those who communicate differently as ordinary. This allows all children to form meaningful friendships while gaining skills needed to be successful in kindergarten.

Research based Applied Behavior Analysis therapy is provided in a natural learning environment where all children interact and have fun while learning. The classrooms in a Walden replica are just like any other preschool classroom, with the exception of a lot of pre-planning to ensure a wide variety of motivating activities and materials are present that will attract all the children and tempt language. The goal is that the activities provide the motivation for learning.

Staff members are trained using high performance criteria and measurement procedures. Low student to staff ratios ensure lots of individualized attention is given to each child.

Focus is also on family involvement. Caregivers are encouraged to participate in their child's day. Support is given to family members to teach ways to utilize the principles of ABA in their daily routines.