

# Painted Playgrounds TOOLKIT



A toolkit providing activities for painted stencils that promote children's physical activity and fundamental motor skill development

**WELL-AHEAD**   
WELLAHEADLA.COM

Painted  
  
Playgrounds

 PENNINGTON  
BIOMEDICAL  
RESEARCH CENTER  
LSU



# Painted Playgrounds Toolkit

This toolkit was a joint effort of Louisiana State University's (LSU) Pennington Biomedical Research Center and the LSU School of Kinesiology. This toolkit was supported in part by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation and the American Council on Exercise.

LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center would also like to thank the Louisiana Pediatric Obesity Mini-Collaborative Improvement & Innovation Network team led by the Louisiana Department of Health for their contribution.

## This toolkit was authored by:

### **Maura Kepper, PhD**

Postdoctoral Fellow  
Contextual Risk Factors Laboratory  
LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center

### **Amanda Staiano, PhD, MPP**

Assistant Professor  
Director, Pediatric Obesity and Health Behavior Laboratory  
LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center

### **E. Kipling Webster, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
LSU's School of Kinesiology

### **Angela Simonton, MS, PES**

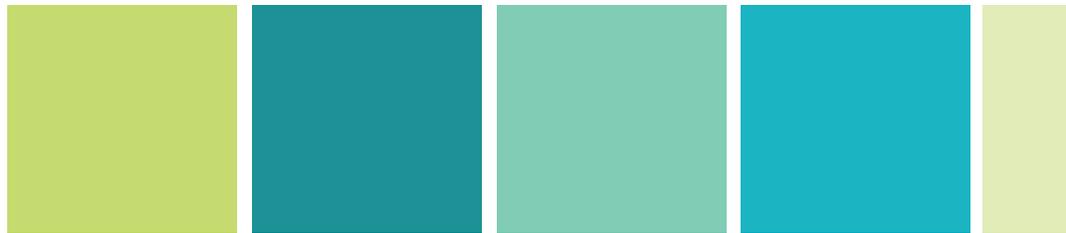
Physical Education Department  
Magnolia Woods Elementary

### **Kelly Simonton, MS, PES**

PhD Graduate Assistant  
LSU's School of Kinesiology

### **Mary Jessica St. Romain**

Project Manager  
Intervention Resources  
LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center



# INTRODUCTION:

This toolkit was developed, in conjunction with our video, to provide caregivers, teachers and other adults who work with preschool-aged children the knowledge and skills to use painted stencils to improve health. This toolkit features fun and safe games to play using painted stencils. These games are designed to increase opportunities for physical activity and help children develop fundamental motor skills, like jumping, throwing, running, and hopping, which are necessary for movement throughout their lives.

## This Toolkit Addresses:

- The benefits of these activities for children.
- Information on fundamental motor skills.
- Tips for assisting children in improving fundamental motor skills.
- Safety tips for playing with stencils.
- Necessary level of instructor involvement for each activity.
- Directions for games to play with each stencil.
- Ways to modify activities to keep children engaged and playing.
- Ways to extend the activities to challenge children with higher skill levels.

## Benefits of Playground Stencils:

- Promote children's active play to increase overall levels of physical activity.
- Help children develop fundamental motor skills (locomotor, object control, and balance/coordination), build confidence in their movement abilities, and start a positive physical activity trajectory that follows them through adolescence and beyond.
- Provide opportunities for structured caregiver/teacher/adult-led activities or games that promote movement and fundamental motor skill development.
- Allow caregivers/teachers/adults to integrate academic concepts, such as numbers, letters, color recognition and spelling, to improve children's cognitive development through movement.

## What are Fundamental Motor Skills?

Fundamental motor skills are basic, goal-directed movements that involve the movement and coordination of different body parts such as the

legs or arms. These skills are the building blocks for more complex and specialized skills that children need throughout their lives to competently participate in active play, team sports, recreational activities, and a lifetime of physical activity.

## There Are 3 Categories of Fundamental Motor Skills:

1. **Balance Skills:** movements where the body remains in place while moving around its horizontal and vertical axes. For example, a child can balance along a narrow balance beam or by walking heel-to-toe.
2. **Locomotor Skills:** movements that transport the body from one point in space to another. Examples include running, jumping (two-feet), hopping (one-foot), skipping, galloping, leaping, or sliding.
3. **Object Control Skills:** involve activities that manipulate or project objects through space. Examples include striking, catching, dribbling, kicking, rolling, or throwing

## Tips for Assisting Children in Improving Fundamental Motor Skills:

- Fundamental motor skills do not naturally emerge, but rather must be taught, practiced, and reinforced for children to gain competency in these skills.
- An important goal in early childhood is for children to learn a wide array of skills to allow them to later combine these skills into traditional physical activity formats that we see in children. For example, children may combine sliding, galloping, running, and dribbling and apply this to a game of basketball.
- Do not enforce a time limit when using these or other activities to teach fundamental

motor skills. Time limits could force children to perform inappropriate movements which may be reinforcing poor execution of motor skills. Rather, teachers should reinforce accuracy and appropriate skill patterns as children play the games.

- Encourage children to master a skill or game at their own pace rather than compete against each other. Developing mastery can help improve a child’s confidence and self-esteem, which helps to maximize participation and enjoyment.
- Children might not establish hand or foot preferences until the age of five, but many children develop patterns and usage preferences before that time. In general, children will learn and develop movement competence with their preferred (or “dominant”) hand or foot first. There is often a lag between children developing skills with their preferred and non-preferred side. Older, more advanced children may be challenged by instructing them to perform a fundamental motor skill leading with their non-preferred hand/foot.
- For more information, please view our video, located on the Well Ahead webpage ([www.wellaheadla.gov](http://www.wellaheadla.gov)), which shows children performing fundamental motor skills and

demonstrates ways for you to assist children as they develop these important skills.

### Important Safety Tips:

- Be sure that the stencil is clear of objects/ natural elements (e.g., rocks, sand) that could cause tripping.
- Children should move at a safe speed, watch for others, and avoid running into others.
- When throwing a marker, make sure children do not throw their marker while others are on the stencil. If possible, the marker should be soft (e.g., bean bag).
- Limit the number of children playing on a stencil at one time. If there are too many children, have others wait in a line until one of the children moves off the stencil.
- Keep in mind that younger kids may not be as proficient in fundamental motor skills as older children, so be sure to be cognizant of activity difficulty.
- If using tricycles, children must wear a helmet every time he or she is on the tricycle and should only ride in protected areas, staying away from vehicles.

### Level of Instructor Involvement:

The level of adult/instructor involvement will be indicated for each activity using the following levels, with 1 star being the least involvement to 5 stars being the most. Extensions or modifications of the activities may require more or less involvement.

	LEAST INVOLVEMENT  MOST INVOLVEMENT				
	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Provide directions on how to play the game	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Model appropriate movements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor from a distance while children play	✓				
Monitor closely while children play		✓	✓	✓	✓
Model/reinforce rules throughout the play		✓	✓	✓	✓
Lead the game			✓	✓	✓
May modify children’s movements				✓	✓
Requires group play so may be challenging					✓

## STENCIL 1:

### SUNFLOWER HOPSCOTCH

#### GAME 1: Sunflower Hopscotch ★

##### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Hop, jump, leap, underhand throw

##### Players:

- If possible, try to have no more than 4 children to a stencil so that each child gets plenty of practice; however, there is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

##### How to Play:

- Using a pebble or a small object as a marker, the first player will underhand throw the object onto one of the leaves. He/she must then jump to the leaves (2 feet to 2 feet) and pick up the object. Then, once the object is received, have the child jump back through the course and hand the object off to the next player.
- If there are no markers, a teacher can simply call out a number to target or allow the child to self-select the targeted area.



##### Modifications:

- Require that students step from spot to spot.
- Require students to leap from one leaf to the next.
- Require that students hop from spot to spot on their preferred foot.
- Require that students hop from spot to spot on their non-preferred foot.
- When the child arrives at their marker, balance on one leg (flamingo stand) to reach out and pick up the marker.

##### Extensions:

- As the child jumps from leaf to leaf, teachers can prompt them to call out the number that they have landed on.
- For players with more control (ages 5+), players can toss their marker onto a specific spot either following numerical order with each turn (turn 1= spot 1; turn 2= spot 2, etc.) or calling which spot they will throw to prior to their turn.
- For players with more control (ages 5+), have the player jump over the spot with the marker. For example, if the marker is tossed to spot 1, they must jump from the starting line at the base of the stencil over spot 1 and land onto spot 3. An alteration may also be that students can land with two feet on two leaves after jumping over the leaf with their marker.

## GAME 2: Sunflower Toss ★★

### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Underhand throw, overhand throw, heel-to-toe walk, tip-toe walk, run, leap, gallop, or other locomotor activities.

### Players:

- If possible, try to have no more than 4 children to a stencil so that each child gets plenty of practice; however, there is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

### How to Play:

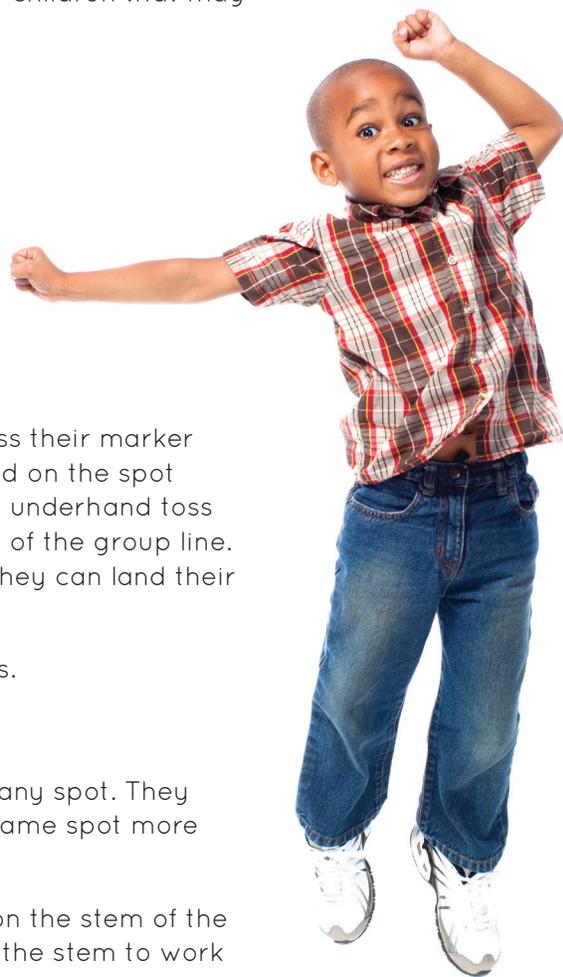
- Players will stand in a group line behind the starting line.
- Using a pebble or a small object as a marker, the first player will underhand toss their marker onto spot 1. That player will then jog quickly to get their marker and jog back to the end of the group line. Once the first player returns and is clearly behind the starting line, the second player can toss their marker onto spot 1.
- When each player returns to the front of the line, they can toss their marker to the next spot, unless their previous toss/marker did not land on the spot intended. If the player misses the spot they are attempting to underhand toss to, he or she will jog to get their marker and return to the end of the group line. On their next toss, the player will toss to the same spot until they can land their marker on the appropriate spot.
- The objective is to accurately toss their marker on all 10 spots.

### Modifications:

- For players with less control, they can toss their marker onto any spot. They must land their marker on 10 spots, but they can toss to the same spot more than once.
- You can alter the game by having the child walk heel-to-toe on the stem of the flower to retrieve their marker or walk on their tip toes along the stem to work on balance.
- For younger children or with more players you can have children play on the right or left hand side of the board.
- Have children throw underhand to the closer targets (numbers 1- 5) or overhand to the further targets (6-10).

### Extensions:

- Require that students use a different locomotor movement (i.e. walk, run, jump, hop, leap, skip, gallop, and slide) every time they go to retrieve their marker.
- Instead of throwing the marker in numerical order, players with high accuracy can choose which spot they want to toss to. When a player lands their marker on a spot, they should initial the spot where the marker landed using chalk and pass it to the next player. The objective is to initial all 10 spots!



## STENCIL 2:

### KEYBOARD

#### GAME 3:

#### Find the Letters and Numbers ★★★

*\*may require white board or note pad\**

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Variety of locomotor skills

#### Players:

- There is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

#### How to Play:

- Write a letter/number on a board or spell a small word (for example: and, the, up, in). Tell students to jump to get to that letter(s)/number(s) and once there, balance on one foot on the letter(s) or number(s) that they see written.

#### Modifications:

- Change the starting point to make this more or less challenging for students.
- Change the type of locomotor skill students should use to get the letter/number. Rather than jump have students run, skip, gallop, leap, slide, or hop.
- Identify only single letters and numbers and have students use a specific locomotor skill to get to that letter or number and then simply touch the keyboard square matching the letter/number. This would allow more students to play the game, as you may have too many students to all balance on the letters/numbers.
- Tell students to stand on a letter/number that is a specific color, pink for example. Help students recognize the letter/number they are standing on.

#### Extensions:

- Have students identify and balance on the letters or numbers in a word/number that you say out loud.
- Identify words that are spelled using only a few letters. Place students in groups corresponding with the number of letters in the words you have selected (i.e. if you focus on words that only have 4 letters, place students into groups of 4). When you write a word/say a word, each member in the group must use a form of locomotion (i.e. running, jumping, skipping, galloping, leaping, sliding, or hopping) to get to a different letter in that word and once there, balance on one foot on the letter.



## GAME 4:

### Alphabet Toss ★★☆☆

*\*may require white board or note pad\**

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Underhand throw, overhand throw, a variety of locomotor skills

#### Players:

- There is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

#### Directions:

- Have students spread out with their marker along 1 side of the keyboard. Write a letter or number on a board. Tell students to underhand toss their marker to the letter or number.
- Next, have the student choose a form of locomotion (i.e. skipping, galloping, leaping, sliding, hopping, etc.) to get to that letter/number.

#### Modifications:

- Identify only single letters and numbers. Go through the alphabet and numbers in order.
- Tell students to toss to a letter/number that is a specific color, pink for example. Help students recognize the letter/number they tossed to.
- Move the starting point around the keyboard to increase or decrease difficulty level.
- Have students throw onto the board and then identify the letter or color that they hit.

#### Extensions:

- Write a word on a board. Tell students to underhand toss their marker to ONE letter they see in the word.
- Identify words that are spelled using only a few letters. Place students in groups corresponding with the number of letters in the words you have selected (i.e. if you focus on words that only have 4 letters, place students into groups of 4). When you write a word/say a word, each member in the group must underhand toss their marker on a different letter in that word, in an effort to spell it as a group, and use some form of locomotion (i.e. skipping, galloping, leaping, sliding, hopping, etc.) to get to that letter.
- Incorporate/ reinforce letters being taught in class, colors with similarities, or weekly vocabulary.



## STENCIL # 3

### Pathways Circuit

#### GAME 5:

#### Pathway Party ★★★★★

*\*may require music\**

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- A variety of locomotor skills and balance/ coordination activities.



#### Players:

- There is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

#### Directions:

- Have a group of children stand around a word (walk, hop, jump, and slide).
- Have the teacher start the music, the children will make their way around the course following the prompted activities (walking tightrope, hopping pebbles, curvy slide line, jump zig-zag line).
- When the music stops, have them freeze, then rotate them clockwise.

#### Activities:

- **Walking Tightrope** - Children should walk along the tightrope, trying to keep their feet on the rope as best as possible. Encourage heel to toe walking or have children walk on tip toes and try to maintain their balance. Children could slide laterally on the line if walking is too easy. Start children sliding on their preferred side and then change to their non-preferred side once they are comfortable with lateral movement.
- **Hopping Pebbles** - Children should travel from pebble to pebble by jumping. If the group can easily jump, have children hop from pebble to pebble on their preferred foot or to increase difficulty their non-preferred foot. Encourage children to improve their accuracy by jumping or hopping in the center of each stone. Encourage children to increase their distance by trying to skip a stone each time they reach the step pebbles. Children can also be encouraged to crab walk or leap along the pebbles, or jump like a frog to each “lily pad.”
- **Jump Zig-Zag Line** - Children should travel from line to line by jumping from 1 to another. Encourage the children to improve their accuracy by jumping in the center of each short line. Children can also be encouraged to step and slide, keeping their foot on the line and slide in and out, or walk along the line either flat-footed, on tip toes, or heel to toe, trying to maintain balance along the turns in the line.



- **Curvy Slide Line** - Children should be encouraged to slide, walk, tip-toe, hop, jump, or gallop (leading with preferred or non-preferred foot) along the curve. As the curves are sharp it would be important for children to control their movements down the line. You may also have children try to walk backward along this line.

#### Modifications:

- Have children begin by walking along all pathways, gradually increasing the difficulty of the movement (run, jump, hop, skip, gallop, leap, slide).
- If there is no music accessible, let kids move for 1 minute increments before changing directions.

#### Extensions:

- Repeat the activity, adding variety along the way. Have the children move in a variety of different ways (i.e. silly, quickly, slowly, quietly, etc.).
- Children can even try moving backwards if developmentally appropriate.
- Have children choose how to travel down the pathway and play follow the leader down their pathway. It is important that adult monitors to make sure their movements are appropriate and safe.



## STENCIL # 4

### Bullseye Toss

#### GAME 6:

#### Bullseye Toss ★★

##### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Overhand throw, underhand throw

##### Players:

- Two or more players can play this game.

##### Directions:

- Using a pebble or a small object as a marker, each player will take turns underhand tossing marker onto the bullseye area while standing from behind the same line. Players will alternate turns tossing. Children should step over the line in front of them to practice contralateral stepping while throwing. This means children should take a large step with the foot opposite their throwing arm to assist with aiming and projecting of the object. This can be done for both overhand and underhand throwing.

##### Modifications:

- Depending on their skill level, each child can be placed on a line that will give everyone an equal chance of landing the marker within the bullseye.

##### Extensions:

- If a player tosses from the same line each time and lands their marker on the bullseye three times, the child must move back and underhand toss from the next farthest line.
- Rather than use an underhand toss, try having the child throw overhand. This is a more difficult movement for this age group, so be sure that this movement is done appropriately.



## GAME 7:

### Number Toss ★★

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Underhand throwing, overhand throwing, variety of locomotor skills.

#### Players:

- If possible, try not to have more than 4 children to a stencil so that each child gets plenty of practice; however, there is no limit on the number of children that may play the game.

#### Directions:

- Students will be in a line off to the side of the numbered lines.
- Using a pebble or a small object as a marker, the first player will underhand toss the marker from line 1 to the bullseye. They will jog quickly to get their marker and jog back to the end of the group line. Once player 1 returns to the end of the group line, player 2 can toss their marker from line 1 to the bullseye.
- When each player returns to the front of the group line, they can begin tossing from line 2, unless their toss/marker missed the bull's eye on their previous turn. If the player misses the bullseye, he or she will jog to get their marker and return to the end of the group line. On their next turn to toss, the player will continue to toss from the same line until they can successfully land their marker on the bullseye from that line.
- The objective is to accurately toss and land their marker on the bull's eye from all 5 lines!

#### Modifications:

- Children can toss from any line that they feel successful from.
- For a younger group it might be easier for students to hop, jump, or leap over the yellow lines (holding the bean bag or small object). Once they have navigated down the stencil they can drop the item they are carrying onto the bulls eye for a target. You may also have children balance walking heel to toe or on tip toes down the main line.

#### Extensions:

- Require that students use a different locomotor movement every time they go to retrieve their marker.
- Rather than use an underhand throw, try having the child throw overhand. This is a more difficult movement for this age group, so be sure that this movement is done appropriately.



# STENCIL # 5

## Bike Path

### GAME 8:

### Safety Course ★★☆☆

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- A variety of locomotor skills

#### Players:

- Number of children should be dependent on spacing and equipment set up.
- If using tricycles, this will be limited to the number of tricycles available. No more than 4 children should ride at the same time.



#### Directions:

- Assign students to act as stop signs or traffic lights and pets or people crossing the street.
- Allow children to walk through the course reminding them to stop at stop signs or red lights, watching for obstacles like pets or people crossing the street. Give them a high five or “way to go!” for each step of the course they complete successfully without reminders.
- Allow children to tricycle through the course at a safe speed, reminding them to stop at stop signs or red lights, watching for obstacles like pets or people walking on the sidewalks. Give them a high five or “way to go!” for each step of the course that they complete successful without reminders.

#### Modifications:

- The instructor will walk students through the course, showing them how to use the pathway correctly.

#### Extensions:

- Choose a different locomotor skill to use throughout the path (walk, jog, run, gallop, slide, jump, hop and skip).
- If you have hula-hoops available, have children use a hula-hoop as a visual for their own car.
- Set gas stations up around the path. Students have to perform a physical activity (i.e. 10 jumping jacks) to fuel up their tank and continue on the path.
- Have skills for each number on the course (1 = bunny hop, 2 = frog jumps, 3 = high knees) where once children pass that number they must complete that activity until they reach the next number. You can write these in chalk next to the numbers or have children self-select a few items that they enjoy most.
- Children could also create a parade through the obstacle course incorporating locomotor skills throughout the parade “route”.

## GAME 9: ★★★★★

### Locomote-A-Thon/Trike-A-Thon

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- A variety of locomotor skills

#### Players:

- Number of children should be dependent on spacing and equipment set up.
- If using tricycles, this will be limited to the number of tricycles available. No more than 4 children should ride at the same time.

#### Directions:

- Mark a line as your start and finish line. On the go signal, children will make their way around the track, stopping every time they cross the start line to receive a stamp or sticker on the back of their hand. These markers will indicate how many times the children have gone around the track.

#### Modifications:

- The class will go through the course together, attempting to get as many class laps as possible.

#### Extensions:

- Choose a different locomotor movement to use throughout the path (walk, jog, run, gallop, slide, jump, hop, skip).
- If you have hula-hoops available, have children participating use a hula-hoop as a visual for their own car.
- Children could also create a parade through the obstacle course incorporating locomotor skills throughout the parade "route".
- You may also incorporate traffic safety lessons or biking/ walking safety (i.e., looking both ways, coming to a complete stop, or hand signals for stop, turning left and right).



# STENCIL # 6

## Mirror Me

### GAME 10:

### Mirror Me ★★

#### Fundamental motor skills targeted:

- Hopping, jumping, balancing, leaping

#### Players:

- The Mirror Me stencil should only be used by two children at a time or by a student and a teacher.

#### Directions:

- Children will be in a group line off to the side of the stencil. One child should be designated the leader for the first round. The remainder of the children in the group line are followers.
- The designated leader will stand on one side of the Mirror Me stencil and the first child in the group line will stand on the other side, facing the leader.
- The leader should perform an action (stand on one number; step two feet to two numbers, etc.), and the child following should mimic that action.
- Once the child following correctly mimics the movement, it is the next child's turn in the group line.
- Change the designated leader every time the group line comes back to the beginning.

#### Modifications:

- Have an instructor stand on one side of the Mirror Me stencil and a child on the other side facing the instructor. The instructor should perform an action (stand on one number; step two feet to two numbers, etc.), and the child should mimic that action. Once the child following correctly mimics the movement, it is the next child's turn in the group line.
- A sequence of movements may also be conducted depending on the age of the children (e.g., right foot on blue, then left foot step on purple, then leap out of the circle, etc.)



## Extensions:

- Instead of stepping to a number, the designated leader could use a different locomotor movement (i.e. jump, hop, leap, and slide) to get to a number.
- Have designated leaders come up with different balances using the stencil.
- Have children perform more than one movement in a row, seeing if the children can mimic a sequence of movements the leader performed.
- If developmentally appropriate, have the children identify the numbers or colors they are stepping or jumping to by saying them out.
- May discuss left and right hand sides of the stencil and work on directions.
- May also work on contralateral movement, stepping on one color and then placing hands on another.

A photograph of two children drawing on a large chalkboard. On the left, a girl with braided hair, wearing a green t-shirt and blue jeans, is standing and drawing a large, colorful fish with chalk. On the right, a girl with braided hair, wearing a pink and white striped t-shirt and blue jeans, is kneeling and pointing at the drawing. The chalkboard is dark, and the drawing is vibrant with red, blue, and yellow colors.

*For more information*

[www.wellaheadla.com](http://www.wellaheadla.com)  
1-844-LAAHEAD  
[wellahead@la.gov](mailto:wellahead@la.gov)

**WELL-AHEAD**   
WELLAHEADLA.COM

 **PENNINGTON  
BIOMEDICAL  
RESEARCH CENTER**  
**LSU**





