

SUGGESTIONS FOR ENRICHING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Design the environment with safety as a priority. Ensure that all surfaces and furniture are free from potential health and safety concerns. Sanitize frequently, especially any surfaces children put in their mouths.
- Provide a mixture of textures, including many soft surfaces and comfortable furniture that encourage climbing and exploration and a home-like atmosphere.
- Include materials that will allow children to use their senses such as several types of music, outdoor wind chimes, paintings, children's artwork, flowers and other plants, fabric, and a variety of different types of books.
- Provide uncluttered spaces for relaxation, as well as room for moving.
- Provide an array of materials children can use to express their creativity and represent what they are learning, including washable, non-toxic paints, crayons, and markers, as well as paper, and *open-ended* materials such as blocks, containers, and fabric.
- Regularly add new materials to the indoor and outdoor environment that will engage children's interest and encourage them to try new experiences and ask questions.
- Organize and arrange materials in an inviting manner. Use trays or placemats to make materials look interesting and stand out. Add real items as props for pretend play.
- Provide activities and materials that support children at their current level, as well as those that offer a challenge. Support and encourage children as they work through these challenges.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Provide children with adequate time to fully explore materials both indoors and outside.
- Notice and respond to children's interests and encourage them to explore and learn more. Infants may show their interest through simple reactions, which adults can acknowledge, describe, and provide additional experiences. Encourage them to notice each other's activities.
- Support children's exploration and discovery. For infants, this may begin with providing tummy time with stimulating toys. Document learning with photographs that can be shared, displayed or added to photo albums or portfolios.
- Provide a variation of experiences for children of all abilities.
- Share excitement and interest in activities, wonder at plants, animals, and events in nature, and show joy in learning new things. Encourage children to do the same.
- Show genuine curiosity. Be a *role* model, showing how to approach new situations and engage in learning.
- Have rich conversations with children by listening, responding to their ideas, interests, questions, and concerns.
- Encourage children to listen carefully to others, ask questions of one another, share, and compare ideas.
- Combine new materials and activities with familiar ones to allow children to explore changes so they may return to activities they are comfortable with.
- Encourage children to find answers to questions using resource books or web searches if available ("Why are those ants carrying grass?").