

### SUGGESTIONS FOR ENRICHING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Incorporate movement and interest into the environment, using such things as fish and other pets, objects suspended from the ceiling, and music for dancing.
- Provide a collection of props to support children's pretend play.
- Periodically rotate toys and materials to spark new ideas.
- Provide a variety of open-ended, real-life, materials for children to investigate, including boxes, wooden blocks, and safe household materials.
- Provide a sufficient amount of time for children to make choices and play imaginatively.
- Set out a selection of art materials that encourage creativity. Change these materials periodically to give children new experiences.
- Add unique objects to interest areas, such as toy animals to the block area to expand play and imagination. This could include objects that fit with current activities, themes, or projects.
- Encourage *divergent thinking* by combining unlikely objects and activities, such as adding colorful fabric squares to the math area or artificial flowers to the sand table.
- Transform the Dramatic Play/Housekeeping area periodically to promote new play scenarios, such as Post Office, Restaurant, Vet Office, Pet Store, Flower Shop, Grocery Store, Bank, Library, etc.

### EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Observe children's individual interests and abilities and provide a variety of materials as well as indoor and outdoor activities that allow them to pursue their interests and develop their *imagination*s.
- Expand children's experiences by exploring new places and introducing them to new activities.
- Nurture *creativity* by encouraging children to use materials in unique and creative ways.
- Assure children that it is fine to get messy as they work with materials. Recognize that some children will not be comfortable with messy activities. Support children in thinking of alternative ways they can do the activity.
- Ask *open-ended questions* that encourage broad, creative thinking; "What would happen if... Why do you think... What could we do... etc."
- Follow children's lead as they play and design activities that will allow them to pursue their interests.
- *Model* skills that support children's ability to join others who are playing, as well as how to invite others to join them.
- Encourage children to plan and talk about what they might do in the dramatic play area (roles they might like to play, props they might like to use, etc.).
- Support children's ability to use their imaginations (help make up new words to songs and new endings for stories).