

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Place infants and young children in various positions that allow them to *observe* the environment from different perspectives (tummy time on a blanket, sitting with support, seated in an infant swing).
- Observe what children are interested in (what toys/objects they like to play with). Notice and name things that interest them. Add toys or other objects that may extend their current play or make it slightly more complex.
- Make a telescope out of a paper towel tube and encourage children to look around the room or outdoors for certain objects (“Do you see anything green?” or “Where is an animal?”).
- Play “Name That Body Part” while changing infants and toddlers and when helping preschool age children dress (“Where are your toes?” or “Show me your ears.”). Sing songs with actions, such as the “*Hokey Pokey*” or “*Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*” where children can use and identify various body parts.
- Allow children time to figure out what to do with new play materials. Take time to watch rather than direct their actions.
- Talk with children during *routine caregiving* tasks about sights, sounds, and smells in the environment (“Smell that bread baking!”).
- Give children opportunities to explore new uses for materials, such as using an empty margarine container as a boat in the water table.
- Ask children *open-ended questions*, such as “What do you think will happen when you put this toy in the water?”
- Encourage children to wonder and ask questions. *Model* a sense of wonder.
- Teach children the steps in the *problem-solving* process: figure out what the problem is, come up with possible solutions, choose and try out a solution, evaluate how well it worked and draw conclusions, and choose another solution if the first one did not work.
- Challenge children to design *tools* to solve problems in their everyday environment and then to evaluate how well their tool worked.
- Provide experiences for children that allow them to see that they can use their senses to discover more about the world around them. Give them opportunities to taste, touch, smell, listen to, and see categories of objects and materials.
- Collect data and make graphs frequently with the children, such as how many seconds it takes various objects to roll down a ramp or what color apple each of them prefers. Discuss and reflect with the children what the data they collected shows.
- Give children opportunities to play with ice cubes and watch them melt in their hands or the water table. Challenge them to keep the ice from melting as long as possible. Talk about the ice being a solid, and then melting into a liquid.
- Do cooking activities, including making playdough and “goop” from cornstarch and water. Talk about how the ingredients combine to make a new type of material, often changing from a liquid to solid.