

Training in a Box

Contents

- Blocks Are Basic
- Creative Art
- Positive Guidance
- Transitions
- Language and Reasoning

Compliments of
Arkansas State University Childhood Services
JoAnn Nalley, Director



BLOCKS ARE BASIC

Developed for Arkansas State University Childhood Services
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This training is designed in 4 sessions, each lasting 30-45 minutes, to enhance early childhood professionals' understanding of block building and its importance in children's learning and creative expression. The trainer will also find suggestions of activities for participants to engage in between the training sessions. Directions for the trainer are noted in **bold**.

Outline of Sessions

- I. Learning through Block Play
- II. Setting up and Supervising a Block Area
- III. Facilitating Children's Learning in the Block Area
- IV. Assessing and Communicating Effectiveness of Block Area

SESSION I: Learning Through Block Play

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers

School supply catalogs, or pages from catalogs showing unit block sets

Selection of unit blocks of various sizes and shapes

Poster board and materials for making posters, such as markers, pencils, rulers

Handouts: *Block shapes and sizes*

Children learn through unit blocks

Stages of block building

Blocks are basic—check your knowledge

Sample poster for the block area

Evaluate your block area—a checklist for teachers

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Unit blocks have particular characteristics
- Children progress through stages in their uses of blocks
- Children learn many things through block building

Introductory Activity

Distribute handout *Blocks Are Basic* and **ask** participants to mark the questions as True or False and then to put away until last session. Outline the topics that will be covered in all the sessions on blocks, pointing out that this first session is to help remind participants of learning values embedded in children's use of unit blocks, and the stages they go through in using blocks.

Exploring Unit Blocks

Distribute school supply catalogs or copies of the pages from catalogs showing unit block sets. Also pass around blocks of various shapes. Ask participants to work in small groups to write descriptions of the characteristics of unit blocks.

Ideas to include:

- proportional in size—mathematical components
- available in various size sets
- made of hardwood
- natural finish
- unit blocks will last many years

Ask participants to use the catalogs to identify the names of the various types of blocks, and pass around the handout *Block Shapes and Sizes*. Following discussion of the handout, ask them to use the blocks as children would. Allow several minutes for this before making the next assignment.

Activity for Stages of Block Building

Divide participants into two groups (four if necessary, to have 6 or fewer in each group). Distribute the Handout *Stages of Block Building*. Give them the following instructions.

In your small group, each person is to select one stage of block play as described on the handout and demonstrate the stage to the rest of the group. Make sure all stages are covered. Demonstrate the stages in the order they are listed on the handout since that is the order that they usually occur in children. If you finish before the time is up, please use the opportunity to discuss ways that teachers can help children advance to the next stage in their block play.

Discuss any questions or examples from participants.

Considering Children's Learning With Blocks

Divide into seven small groups or pairs. (If you don't have enough participants for 7 pairings, combine social/emotional and creative, and math and science.)

Assign each group one of the following aspects of development to consider as they define specific leanings and benefits from the use of blocks: physical development; social/emotional development; creativity; cognitive development; math learning; science learning; and literacy learning. Give them chart paper to list their findings and post for large group to consider. Then compare lists with handout *Children Learn Through Unit Blocks*. Discuss examples of learning they have observed.

Wrap-up Activity

Divide the group into small groups of three or four participants. Give the groups materials for making posters, and the following directions.

Using the materials provided, make a poster to educate parents about what children learn in the block area. This poster may be posted in your block area as a reminder to all about the value of unit blocks. Remember that too much information can be confusing and hard to read in a poster. Keep the working brief and make the writing large enough so that it can be easily read from a distance. Feel free to add illustrations if you wish.

Use the sample poster handout to stimulate thinking. When posters are finished, have participants display them for all to appreciate.

For Next Session

Distribute handout *Evaluate Your Block Area: A Checklist For Teachers*. Ask staff to use the checklist to assess the block area in their own classroom and bring back to next session.

Children Learn Through Unit Blocks

PHYSICAL

Coordination
Visual Perception
Motor Development
Spatial Orientation
Fine Motor Coordination

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

Competence
Success
Self Esteem
Autonomy
Initiative
Equality
Cooperation
Negotiation
Compromise
Responsibility
Leadership
Social Studies Concepts
Emotional Release

CREATIVE

Associations
Relationships
Problem-solving
Finding New Solutions
Sensory Exploration

COGNITIVE

Symbolization and Representation
Comparisons
Classification
Concepts
Directionality
Sequence
Divergent Thinking
Logical Reasoning

MATH

Area
Size
Order
Space
Shapes
Numbers
Mapping
Patterns
Measuring
Fractions
Operations
Estimating
Negative Space
Adding
One to One Correspondence
Seriation

SCIENCE

Weight
Height
Gravity
Balance
Symmetry
Textures
Action/Reaction
Cause and Effect
Spatial Visualization
Simple Machines

LITERACY

Labeling
Vocabulary
Recalling Stories
Creating/Dictating Stories
Sentence Structure
Making and Using Signs
Using Books as Resources
Using Writing

Samples Poster for the Block Area

Through block play children learn

- Language skills
- Reading and writing readiness
- Many science and math concepts
- To cooperate and be responsible

Stages of Block Building

STAGE 1: Very young children carry blocks around without using them for construction. They are learning about the properties of blocks: size, weight, shape, how many can be carried, etc. They often pile or stack them irregularly.

STAGE 2: Children make mostly rows or towers. At this stage there is much repetition as children try out different size and shape arrangements of blocks.

STAGE 3: Children begin bridging, using a block to connect two others with a space between. They learn to estimate distance and to balance.

STAGE 4: Children form enclosures by placing blocks in a way to define space. Vertical enclosures may be an expanded form of bridging.

STAGE 5: Children make buildings, usually without naming them. There is much symmetry in their work. Decorative patterns will often be repeated until all blocks of a certain type are used.

STAGE 6: Children begin to name structures and to use them for dramatic play.

STAGE 7: Children create buildings that reproduce or symbolize actual structures with which they are familiar. There is much dramatic play associated with the structures at this stage.

Children generally progress through these stages regardless of the age at which blocks are introduced. Some children will need to frequently repeat activities such as making rows, towers, bridges, or enclosures to gain confidence. Children usually move from one stage to the next by observing other children or through their own experimentation.

Blocks Are Basic Check Your Knowledge

Mark the following True or False

Before

After

_____	Blocks are important for children of all ages.	_____
_____	Children learn a lot from blocks.	_____
_____	Blocks are too expensive for small centers.	_____
_____	Because blocks are so interesting to children, supervision is not necessary.	_____
_____	Unit blocks are proportional (related) in size.	_____
_____	To properly set up a block area, you should have a rug and shelves marked to show where the blocks go.	_____
_____	Children should always be expected to build something in the block area.	_____
_____	Accessories for block play can include cars, trucks, signs, animals, and people.	_____
_____	To introduce blocks to children, the teacher needs only to tell children the rules and what the blocks are called.	_____
_____	The only way to get children to clean up is to require that they do it..	_____
_____	Showing interest in what children are doing is a good way to get them interested.	_____

How have your ideas of how to use blocks changed as a result of this training?

What will you do differently to enrich block play in your classroom?

What was the best part of the training for you?

Evaluate your Block Area: A Checklist for Teachers

Use this checklist to periodically evaluate the success of the block area. It can be a self-evaluation, part of a peer review, or for a supervisor to use.

1. Is the block area in a location free from traffic?
2. Are the boundaries clear?
3. Are visual distractions minimized?
4. Is a generous supply of unit blocks available?
5. Are the blocks arranged on shelves orderly and attractively conducive to constructive play?
6. Is the area carpeted to reduce noise?
7. Is the number of children who can use the center posted? Is the number of children shown appropriate for the size of the block area?
8. Is there space to leave constructions remaining during the day or overnight?
9. Are there boards, trucks, trains, wooden animals and figures, and other props to enrich the block play?
10. Does the schedule allow for large periods of time for involvement in play?
11. Are mathematical concepts developed through block play?
12. Are the children encouraged to engage in construction activities after a story or trip?
13. Are the adults over-anxious because a block or building may fall?
14. Are accessory toys arranged near the block area so that children have easy access to them? Do the children know where to find what they need?
15. Are referenced materials available (e.g.: books and pictures about airports, etc.) to clarify and extend the learning developed during block building?
16. Is a camera available to take pictures of block structures?
17. Are there any children who never use the block area? What is being done to encourage them?
18. Do the children build constructively?
19. Are children given the opportunity and skills to solve their problems themselves?
20. Are literacy experiences encouraged through the block play?

SESSION II: Setting Up and Supervising a Block Area

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers
School supply catalogs or pages showing block accessories
Collections of accessories, both purchased and scrounged

Handouts

Unit blocks partner activity
Accessory list
Preparing for block play
Procedures for block play
Guidelines for children for block play
Cleaning up after block play

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Appropriate setting up of the block area promotes good block play and prevents problems
- Accessories stimulate creative block play
- Positive guidelines help children use blocks safely and productively
- Clean up is a learning experience

Introductory activity (review of last session)

Distribute handout *Unit Blocks Partner Activity*. Ask participants to answer the questions themselves, and then find a partner to discuss their answers. Review any questions or discussion.

Discussion of setting up block area

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4. Assign them the task of identifying guidelines for setting up an effective block area, including considerations for location, space, and boundaries; number and ages of children; safety and guidelines; maintenance and clean up ease. Then have the groups contribute their ideas to a general discussion. Be sure to cover the points listed below.

- In protected area, away from traffic pattern, separate from quiet activities
- Boundaries established visually by shelf placement, tape on floor, etc.
- Large building area provided, preferably big enough to leave structures in progress, and ample storage
- Carpeted area to reduce noise
- Number of children using center limited and posted
- Shelves labeled with shapes for easy clean up
- Open bins for block accessories, separated and labeled
- Posters and pictures to stimulate theme building
- Clear limits on use of blocks and places for building

Activity with accessories

Distribute school supply catalogs or pages with accessories. Assign a hypothetical amount of money for purchases, and ask participants to identify the accessories they would select to enhance block play. Share the ideas, then **distribute and discuss** handout *Accessory List*. Particularly note the list of free and found accessories, and ask participants to contribute other ideas, then to check off the accessories they already have, and identify where they can get some of the others. **Ask** each participant to bring a free/found accessory in a bag to the next session.

Establishing guidelines

Ask participants to identify possible guidelines that children might generate if asked to develop their own rules for positive experiences in the block area. List these on a chart page. Compare the guidelines with those on the handout *Guidelines For Children For Block Play*. Discuss how limits prevent problems, and the need for safety and order.

Supervising and facilitating block play

Distribute and discuss handouts *Preparing for Block Play* and *Procedures for Block Play*. Note that the next session will be devoted more to adult interaction with children in the block area.

Cleaning up after block play

Ask participants to share ways they have found to help involve children in the clean up after block play. List on chart paper. Then **distribute and review** the ideas on the handout *Cleaning Up After Block Play*. Be sure your discussion includes these concepts.

- Focus on learning
- Give advance notice
- Model and demonstrate
- Incorporate math
- offer choices
- Make it manageable—store accessories conveniently using dishpans, baskets, boxes, and trays; laminated pictures for cues; remove only what is needed; return blocks during activities
- Make it fun—tickets; wagons, carts, and trucks; assembly line; baskets and dishpans; song, chants, and finger plays; choosing shelves.

Wrap-up activity

Ask participants to get out the checklist they did evaluating their block area, and to identify one change they could make, based on the day's discussion.

FOR NEXT TIME

Remind participants to bring a new free/found accessory in a bag (closed with their name on) to the next session.

Accessory List

Purchased Accessories Common to Block Play

Rubber, plastic, or wooden animals	Popsicle sticks (for signs and fences)
Traffic signs	Tongue depressors
Vehicles of all kinds	Easter grass
Rubber, plastic, or wooden people	Play mats
Small cubes or other blocks to decorate constructions	Pipe cleaners (chenille sticks)
Small doll houses	Wooden beads
	Doll house furniture
	Play mats

Free and Found Accessories

Cardboard pieces for roofs	Thread spools
Boxes (to make into buildings)	Countertop samples
Tile or vinyl flooring squares	Cardboard tubes from paper towels
Carpet samples	Plastic lids
Film canisters (for towers)	Parquetry wood flooring samples
Pictures of buildings, bridges, cities, farms, etc.	Wallpaper sample books
Strawberry baskets	Foil or cellophane
Styrofoam trays	Blueprints
Fabric swatches for tents, curtains, bedspreads, etc.	Rubber bands of various sizes
Yarn or string for cables or fences	

Dress-up Clothes

Dress-up clothes add excitement to the block area. A construction hat, fire helmet, or engineer's cap can enrich play and link the block area to curriculum themes. Dress-up clothes invite the children to engage in dramatic play with the blocks.

Posters and Pictures

Large pictures and posters can stimulate play ideas. A large picture of a highway construction site may suggest ideas about road building. A poster of a family shopping for groceries might suggest building a grocery store.

Unit Blocks Partner Activity

Discuss these questions with your partner. Write the answers on the form. Be as creative as you wish.

1. Why are blocks important to young children?
2. What can children learn from them?
3. Give suggestions for setting up a block area.
4. Describe some stages children progress through in their block play.

Sample Guidelines for Block Play

- We build with blocks, not throw them.
- You may knock down only the tower you build.
- You may build as tall as you are.
- We keep the blocks on the carpet.
- We build away from the shelves.
- We build away from others.
- We take only what we will use.

Preparing for Block Play

- ☑ Make sure blocks are sorted and neatly arranged.
- ☑ Include accessories related to current curriculum interests. For example, offer some trucks after visiting a construction site.
- ☑ Note children's interests from the previous day and have these materials and embellishments readily available. The best accessories are those that children request.
- ☑ Be aware of specific concepts which children might learn with the blocks and accessories.
- ☑ Be sensitive to the expressed interests and requests of the children as they approach the blocks.
- ☑ Children may be attracted to the area if the teacher builds some small, interesting structure to begin with; but this creation should be offered as a stimulus, not as a model to copy.
- ☑ Avoid setting out every accessory the school owns. Too many accessories result in a cluttered area, which ultimately discourages participation and creates resistance to cleaning up.
- ☑ When outdoors, set out a supply of large hollow blocks at first. Encourage children to get out the rest as needed.

Cleaning Up After Block Play

Some teachers discourage block play because they dislike picking up the blocks afterward. However, this problem can be alleviated with a little planning and specific guidance techniques.

Encourage the children to help but do not require children to put away every block they get out before leaving the area. Many children will not participate under these conditions; thus enforcement of this rule can spoil their play. You will obtain the best cooperation from children if they are warned far enough ahead of time that they have time to bring their play to a conclusion. It also helps if the teacher pitches in too, so everyone puts the blocks away together at the end of the playtime.

Always categorize blocks neatly when putting them away. Place them with the long side in view to make their size readily apparent. Never dump them in a bin or tub. Children will have difficulty finding the needed sizes when blocks are not stored in an orderly manner. They will simply scatter blocks unnecessarily if you store them in a bin or in any disorganized manner.

Return extra accessories to the storage area and arrange the remaining ones so they are attractive, colorful accents in the room. Leaving accessories out for too long will cause the children to lose interest in them. To have too much stuff out is just as bad as to not have enough.

Always give advance notice that playtime is coming to an end. Children resist when suddenly interrupted in their play, especially when they are very involved. Children need time to fully explore their ideas, follow through on them and create constructions.

View clean up time as a positive learning experience. Recognize its value as a matching and sorting activity. Clean up time should not be considered just a necessary chore.

Techniques to Motivate Children to Clean up

Shape Tickets

Laminate block shapes on pieces of poster board. Each child picks up all the blocks that match the ticket s/he has drawn

✓ **Number Tickets**

Put a range of numbers on pieces of poster board and laminate. Each child picks up the number of blocks as on the ticket they draw. This is a good technique to use math skills in a meaningful way.

✓ **Offer Choices**

Ask children, “Do you want to pick up the long ones or the short ones?” Then you do the others. When children have a choice, they are more cooperative.

✓ **Singing and Chanting**

Sing or chant a rhyme while you are cleaning. Make up your own words to a familiar tune.

✓ **Choosing Shelves**

Let the children select a shelf and replace the blocks that go on that shelf. They can work in pairs for this if a shelf has many blocks to put away.

Procedures for Block Play

- Sit down nearby on a low chair. Your presence is one of the best incentives to block play.
- Teach children to select blocks and carry them away from the shelves so that everyone can easily reach shelves as building continues. Encourage taking only what they need.
- Be an interested observer of the children's block play. Be ready to redirect children or offer suggestions to extend the activity according to their interests. Avoid taking over the play. Make sure it remains the children's activity.
- Remember that children need time to play with their structures after they build them. Children like leaving structures up during nap or overnight when possible.
- Stress that block buildings belong to the children who did the work. Children may knock down their own structures but not destroy the work of others. Dumping all the blocks onto the floor and running off or throwing blocks must be prevented. Children who "sweep" blocks off the shelves need to stay and help pick them up.
- Drawing diagrams of the children's constructions from time to time or taking instant photos increases the child's interest and satisfaction in this activity. If a carbon copy is made, one copy can go home and the other can be retained in the child's folder as part of his developmental record. Be sure to date it and note the child's companions and comments.
- Mathematical relationships should be casually drawn to the children's attention as the occasion allows.
- Tidy up as needed to keep the play area attractive and to make room for more building.

SESSION III: Facilitating Children's Learning in the Block Area

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers
Unit blocks and trucks for props for role plays

Handouts

Role play—interacting with children to guide the block play
Conversations with children about blocks
Encouraging imaginative, creative play
Suggested variations for unit block play

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Teachers who interact with children during block play can extend their experiences
- When varied experiences are offered, children's interest in block building is maintained
- Literacy connections can be embedded in block play

Grab bag activity

Ask participants to pass the bags with accessories around the circle, stopping after a minute, being sure everyone has someone else's bag. Then ask participants to display the accessory in the bag, identifying who brought it. That participant may tell others where she got the accessory, and how the children responded, if it has been used.

Adult interaction to expand play

Discuss the ways adults can use conversation in the block area to promote thinking and indicate their interest in the block play. This includes: expanding children's language; offering suggestions without taking over the play; reflecting and verbalizing the child's actions; and utilizing literacy opportunities.

Introduce handouts *Scenarios for Role Play* and *Conversations With Children About Block Play*. Ask for volunteers to play each role in the scripts, using the props. After each scenario, **ask the observers for their reactions, and discuss**. This should take some time, as participants learn to identify the teaching opportunities embedded in the play.

Note: sometimes participants have particular experiences they would like to discuss. Turn these into role plays to act out, in order to analyze possible teacher responses.

Ideas for encouraging imaginative, creative play, and variations

Ask participants to generate a list of all the ways they can think of to encourage imaginative and creative play with unit blocks and accessories. **List** the suggestions on chart paper. Then **distribute** the handout *Encouraging Imaginative, Creative Play*. Discuss the handout together, and ask participants to add too it any ideas that they had suggested that were not on the handout. Then consider handout *Suggested Variations for Unit Block Pplay*. Ask participants to identify ideas they already use, and add some additional ideas on the lines at the end of the worksheet.

Literacy connections

Discuss opportunities for literacy that can be integrated in block play. Include: introducing vocabulary; dictating stories and descriptions of block building; creating experience charts; making lists and signs (materials available); and labeling, as well as use of books for stimulation.

FOR NEXT SESSION: Each participant should find, use with children, and bring a children's book that could be used to stimulate block play. Be prepared to describe the experience using the book.

Role Play – Interacting with Children to Guide Block Play

Scenarios for Role Play

Scenario One

(Props: Unit blocks and toy dump truck)

- Steven:** You are a four-year-old boy playing with a dump truck in the block area. Another child reaches for the truck and you end up in a struggle.
- LaDonna:** You are a four-year-old girl playing in the block area. You see another child playing with a dump truck and want it. You grab for it and end up in a tug-a-war for the toy.
- Teacher:** You hear two children in the block area struggling over a dump truck. Both claim to have had it first. How do you respond?

Scenario Two

(Props: Unit blocks)

- Andre:** You are a three-year-old boy playing in the block area. You try repeatedly to build a tower as tall as you are. Another child keeps getting in the way of your tower and knocks it over for the third time.
- Shedarien:** You are a three-year-old boy in the block area. You are trying to build a road starting next to the shelves. You have accidentally knocked down Andre's tower three times.
- Teacher:** You hear a commotion in the block area. You can tell that Andree is getting angry. How do you respond? What else do you need to know? How might you find out other information?

Scenario Three
(Props: Unit blocks)

- Jared:** “That’s the shuttle. That’s what I saw last night on television.” you state confidently.
- Sophia:** “Hey, “ you reply, “I remember that it had a launching ramp. I’ll put one here. There. That will be the launching ramp for the shuttle!”
- Jared:** “This is the building beside the shuttle,” you state to no one in particular.
- Teacher:** What might you say to the children to expand the experience?

Scenario Four
(Props: Unit blocks)

- Amanda:** You are a five-year-old. You say to Rachel, “I’ll bet you can’t build the football stadium. It’s too big. No one can build it.”
- Rachel:** You are a five-year-old. You went to a football game with your parents last week. “I’m going to do it!” I know I can make a stadium!”
- Teacher:** What might you say to the girls?

Conversations with Children about Blocks

(Props: Unit Blocks)

Pick one or more of the scenarios below. Plan how you will react to the situation to expand a child's language and play activities. Role-play your response to your group.

1. **Almeta:** (to child attempting to knock down her building) No! No! You can't do that! I build it! It's mine!

2. **Sudie:** I'll build a city and you make the highway come to it. Make a long highway with a bridge.

Michael: There's no place to go! You need the city first. You can't have a highway without a city! Make the city first!

3. **Cedric:** You can't come in. Girls can't come in the block area! This is for boys!

4. **Esau:** (gathering up a load of blocks) "I'm taking these blocks to the art area. I want to build over there. I'm going to take them all!"

5. **Kelly:** This is a store. You can buy stuff. You can get presents, too. Everyone has to give me money for the presents. Give me money for presents.

6. **Allie:** My mama bought me a bracelet and my sister a bumblebee pin.

Haley: I have an elephant pin and an elephant bracelet. My Daddy bought them for me last weekend.

7. **Kristen** (putting block on top of tower): This is like a real house. I can make it taller. It just won't stay. I can't make it stay, Miss Jordan! It always falls down! (slamming down blocks)

8. **Andrew:** I can build a real house. I put in a window and a door and a chimney. Hey the chimney fell down! I can fix it. I'll fix it now!

9. **Mae Lu:** This is the planetarium, and that is the river. You need a bridge to get over the river. We can go in the van. It'll take a long time.

10. **LaDonna:** This is my house. You can come to my birthday party next week. We'll have ice cream.

Derrick: I know when your birthday is. I like ice cream. Today when I went to the store, there were chocolate hearts. I'm going to buy chocolate hearts and bring them to your birthday.

11. **Mia:** One of our blocks fell down. It won't stay. I want it bigger.

Megan: Make it bigger. I'll do it.

Mia: Let's make a bigger one. Put a chair here so we can get up on it.

Megan: Wait, don't do that! You might fall and get hurt!

Encouraging Imaginative, Creative Play

Here are important factors to encourage creative, imaginative play:

- ❑ Provide a background of experiences that suggest possibilities for the children to pretend, such as a trip to the doctor's office or the fire station.
- ❑ Provide plenty of equipment that is unstructured.
- ❑ Allow children to use equipment in creative, possibly unconventional but harmless ways, to meet the needs of their play.
- ❑ Provide accessories to enhance play themes or to suggest a theme for play.
- ❑ Provide unusual arrangements and placements of equipment to stimulate and extend play. For example, combine the unit blocks with hollow blocks, cube blocks, or Lego's.
- ❑ Keep the play area appealing with materials easily accessible and orderly.
- ❑ Most importantly, support children's play by offering suggestions and being involved to continue to enrich it. Do not dominate children's play.

- ❑ **Add your own ideas here.**

Suggested Variations for Unit Block Play

- Widen the variety of shapes of blocks as the year progresses. Start with a few shapes, and then include cylinders, pillars, ramps, gothic arches, roofing boards and switches.
- Add a dollhouse with furniture and dolls to expand the play activity.
- Offer small cars and trucks. Include additional transportation toys, such as boats and airplanes.
- Provide a small wooden train and tracks to suggest ideas for play.
- Include wooden or rubber animals and people. Be sure they are able to stand alone.
- Suggest that children incorporate tables into their block structures, particularly when adding smaller blocks. Working on a table changes the experience for the child.
- Offer long boards or pieces of cardboard as accessories for roofs and ramps.
- Move the block cabinet to another area in the room occasionally. This often stimulates involvement of children who have not been attracted to them before. Take the opportunity to re-introduce the block area to focus attention on it.
- Combine unit blocks with other types of blocks. Add cubical counting blocks for a touch of color and decoration. Try Bristle Blocks, Lego's, Duplos, and other construction toys. They all add value in playful, learning activities children enjoy.
- **Add your own ideas here.**

SESSION IV: Assessing and Communicating Effectiveness of Block Area

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers

ECERS-R, or copies of page for Item 22

Video: *Block Play: Constructing Realities*. NAEYC, 20 min. Available from Childhood Services office, and Arkansas Child Care Resource Center

Handout: *Blocks are basic* (used in Session I)

Interview about Blocks Partner Activity

Crossword Puzzle

Sample parent letter

Concepts to be emphasized during this session

- ECERS-R has guidelines regarding use of blocks in the program
- Blocks are important learning materials
- Parents need to be educated regarding importance of block play

Introductory activity—crossword puzzle

As participants gather, **ask** them to complete the crossword puzzle handout. Briefly **share answers**.

Books to promote block play

Facilitate a brief show and share of the books participants have chosen to stimulate block play. Encourage participants to note titles and authors.

ECERS-R on Blocks

Review Item 22 on block play. Note that these ideas have already been introduced in earlier sessions. **Ask** participants to rate their classrooms based on the indicators, and to note ways they can improve their rating in use of blocks. Encourage participants to watch for evidence of these indicators of excellence in block play as they watch the video.

Block Play: Constructing Realities [Video]

The video should act as a good summary and reinforcement of the ideas about block discussed in the earlier sessions. **Discuss** any questions and observations.

Concluding activities

To summarize important learning about block play, **distribute** handout *Interview About Blocks Partner Activity*. Ask pairs to discuss the questions on the sheet, and then **share** one new idea with the whole group.

Finally, have participants look again at the handout *Blocks Are Basic*, completing the True/False segments again, and answering the last 3 questions. **Discuss** importance of educating parents about the important learning involved in block play. **Distribute** handout *Sample Parent Letter*, and challenge participants to send out their own letter soon.

Interview About Blocks Partner Activity

You will be assigned to be person A or person B. If you are person A, interview person B and take notes in the space provided. Then person B interviews A and takes notes.

Person A. Interview Your Partner.

1. How do you communicate that blocks are important?

2. What accessories do you use with blocks?

3. What is your best tip for getting children to pick up the blocks and put them away?

Person B. Interview Your Partner.

1. What are some ways you relate the block area to themes?

2. How do you supervise the block area?

3. How do you keep block play from getting out of hand?

Share one new idea with the whole group.

Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parents:

Children learn many things from the special blocks in our classroom. The blocks are called Unit Blocks because they are designed to be proportional in size to help children learn math and other skills. Some of the math skills they learn are counting, comparison of length and width, names of shapes, and how to combine some geometric shapes to make other shapes. They are even learning the basics of addition when they discover that two short blocks will be the same length as the next size block.

Children learn science when they experience gravity as their constructions fall, and they learn the use of simple machines such as ramps through their building. They learn language skills and vocabulary as they talk about what they are creating and discuss their experiences that they are representing with the blocks. Children develop an understanding of geography as they create maps with the blocks. They acquire an understanding of sequence, an important reading skill, as they retell their experiences with the blocks. Children learn to write as they make signs and as I help them write stories about what they are building.

Children learn to cooperate and share when they work together with the blocks. They develop problem-solving skills and learn good work habits since they are responsible for picking up when they finish.

While your children will tell you they are playing, they are actually learning math, science, and literacy using the blocks. Please visit and watch for yourself!

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

CREATIVE ART

Developed for Arkansas State University Childhood Services
By Sally Davis Jordan

This training consists of four sessions, each lasting 30-45 minutes. It is hoped that the training will support teachers to improve their classroom practices, offering children excellent art experiences. In addition to the four sessions, the modules include suggestions for activities for participants between sessions. Directions to the trainer are noted in **bold**.

Outline of Sessions

- I. What is Creative Art?
- II. Art and Learning
- III. Great Ideas for the Classroom
- IV. Communicating Respect for Children's Art

SESSION I: What is Developmentally Appropriate Art?

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers

Orange pumpkins, cut from construction paper

Black construction paper cut into small triangles (3 per participant) plus 1 crescent shape

Glue

Sheets of black construction paper, and lots of small squares of various colors, crayons

Plain sheets of paper

Book *Bear Picture*, by Daniel Pinkwater (This title is out of print—you might find it at a library.

Or substitute a similar book.)

Handout *Flowers are Red*, by Harry Chapin

Concepts to be emphasized during this session

- Art is a means for children to express their learning about the world, and to explore their creativity
- Good art experiences allow for children's unique interests and ideas
- Developmental art recognizes that children progress through stages in their use of art materials

Introductory activity

Ask participants to relax and enjoy the story you will **read** to them: *Bear Picture*, by Daniel Pinkwater. Then discuss the ideas about art implied in the story. Include the following points.

- * act of creation belongs to individual and should not be influenced by others
- * concept of process vs. product
- not necessarily representational
- satisfaction of creator
- art as expression of experience and emotion

Art experiences

Distribute orange pumpkin shapes and 3 black triangles and crescent for mouth, and glue. Announce they will make jack-o-lanterns. Tell the teachers how to glue the black pieces on the orange, giving them exact directions. For the purpose of this exercise, insist that all follow directions, and ask those who don't follow exactly to re-do their work—better have a few extra

triangles and crescents in case any of your participants are determined to do their own thing. Then have all hold up jack-o-lanterns. (**Time how long this takes, and note uniformity of products.**)

After completing the jack-o-lanterns, **hand out** sheets of black paper, and piles of small squares of various colors, and make crayons available. Then tell participants to make what they like. Time this activity also, and note conversations during process. **Trainer should circulate, observe activity, and make appreciative comments.** When finished, have participants hold up their creations. **Facilitate discussion** on the differences in the ways the two methods worked, and **list key points** on chart paper.

- more time and talking involved in the second process, most likely
- no two alike
- real involvement when allowed to use own ideas and creativity vs. only one way to complete the project, etc.

Discuss their feelings about each process, and point out parallels in children's experiences of being allowed to use materials any way they choose, or in being restricted.

Discuss how use of models and directions in art experiences impedes children's thinking. Message of models: "make something just like this. If it doesn't look like this, it isn't right." While there are times for learning to follow directions and practice skills, creative art is not one of these.

Point out and list different roles for adults in each of the experiences—in first, adult had to spend a lot of time preparing materials, then it was necessary to be there and directing children's activity, making sure they do it "right." In second, adult spent less time preparing materials, and free to interact and observe participants' activity while they were involved—could also have left area, as children were involved and directing their own process. Occasional comment from teacher usually all that is necessary. As facilitator observed, were there places where she could have offered additional materials or ask children if they needed a particular item for their project?—also appropriate role for adult, though not appropriate to point out how project could be improved.

Summary of points about developmentally appropriate art.

- children allowed to choose the ways they explore, express, and create with materials
- children encouraged to use their talents and originality
- adult role is to provide interesting materials, assist the children with learning skills necessary to use the materials, and show interest and respect for individual patterns of working and creating.
- process, not the product, is the key goal of developmental art. Products purposely made are crafts, not art.
- choice is a key component of art experiences. Children may be encouraged but should not compelled to participate.

Stages of Art Activity

Distribute and review handout *Creative Art in the Classroom*

Give out blank pages and crayons.

Assign a particular stage or basic form to each participant or pair of participants, depending on the number—for the basic forms, you could assign 2-3 to illustrate that stage, as they might all be different. **Ask** participants to label their illustration with the title of the stage and post on the wall. Then do a “gallery crawl” while participants look at the various examples. **Discuss** any questions.

Wrap-up activity

Read aloud the handout *Flowers are Red* by Harry Chapin. Ask participants to continue thinking about how emphasis on product vs. process and just one right way to make things has negative effects on creativity and initiative in expression and on self-confidence as a learner.

FOR NEXT TIME: Collect at least 2 samples of children’s artwork that illustrate 2 different stages.

FLOWERS ARE RED

By Harry Chapin

The little boy went first day of school
He got some crayons and started to draw
He put colors all over the paper
For colors was what he saw
And the teacher said...What you doing young man
I'm a painting flower, he said
She said...It's not the time for art young man
And anyway flowers are green and red
There's a time for everything young man
And a way it should be done
You've got to show concern for everyone else
For you're not the only one

And she said...
Flowers are red young man
Green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they have always been seen

But the little boy said...
There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the flower and I see every one

Well the teacher said.. You're sassy
There's ways that things should be
And you'll paint the flowers the way they are
So repeat after me....

And she said...
Flowers are red young man
Green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they always have been seen

But the little boy said...
There are so many colors in the rainbow
So many colors in the morning sun
So many colors in the slower and I see every one
The teacher put him in a corner
She said...It's for your own good..
And you won't come out 'til you get it right
And are responding like you should

Well finally he got lonely
Frightened thoughts filled his head
And he went up to the teacher
And this is what he said...and he said

Flowers are red, green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they always have been seen

Time went by like it always does
And they moved to another town
And the little boy went to another school
And this is where he found
The teacher there was smiling
She said...Painting should be fun
And there are so many colors in a flower
So let's use every one

But that little boy painted flowers
In neat rows of green and red
And when the teacher asked him why
This is what he said...and he said

Flowers are red, green leaves are green
There's no need to see flowers any other way
Than the way they always have been seen.

CREATIVE ART IN THE CLASSROOM

Children go through certain sequences in all their learning. This is true regardless of race, culture, nationality, sex or family income level. We have all observed babies as they first gain control of their head, then their arms, and then their legs. Development proceeds downward and outward in all children. All children crawl before they can walk. They all walk before they can run.

In the same way, children progress through stages of art.

STAGES OF ART

Twelve to eighteen months

Children are in the scribble stage. They will make random marks on paper if a pencil, or crayon or marker is placed in their hand. There is no control, and no effort to make a recognizable drawing. If the children are asked, "Tell me about your picture," they do not have an answer since they are scribbling because they are delighting in the movement.

Two years

Children discover that there is a connection between the crayon in the hand and the marks on the paper. There is more control to the motions they make. However there is still no relationship between what is drawn and anything concrete. They are not yet trying to draw *something*.

Three to three and one-half

Children may name their scribbles, but there is no realism to their drawings. They have an imaginative conceptualization—that is, they know what they want to draw, and they believe the drawings look like the concept they have in their minds. They will tell you, "I'm drawing a doggie," but the marks on the paper will look like scribbles to everyone but the child, who can see the doggie!

BASIC FORMS STAGES

These stages overlap the developmental stages above. It is interesting to see how children of a certain age and stage begin to draw these basic forms on their own.

Vague Shapes (ages 2-4): circles, crosses, squares, rectangles and other shapes are roughly visible, but no true shapes are mastered. Remember these children have limited motor ability. The idea may be in the head, but it cannot yet travel down to the hand with any consistency.

Actual Shapes (ages 3-5): There is more refined motor control, and drawings have a singular outline of a shape. Squares are closed, and of roughly equal sides. Here's where the child will draw the doggie!

Combined Shapes (ages 3-5): Children create designs by combining and repeating various shapes. They draw shapes within shapes.

Mandalas and Suns (ages 4 –6): These ancient symbols date back to prehistoric times. The sun is a circle with various rays. It may be drawn in the corner of the paper, but still usually has rays. The mandala is a circle with four rays, one at the top, one at the bottom, one at the left and one at the right of the circle. These symbols are usually perfectly balanced and they emerge from the children without their being shown how to make them!

Drawing Stage (ages 4-5): Children will begin drawing people with what appear to be large heads with limbs emerging from the head, and with eyes. This large, blobby shape is not really a head, but is the person. You may notice that the eyes are generally near the top. Gradually the drawings will mature into torso, head and limbs. The child will begin to add more details—hands with fingers, torsos with belly buttons, eyes with pupils and eyelashes. We once had a student who loved to draw ribs on her people! It was like looking at a child's concept of an X-ray!

As the drawings become more recognizable, there may be several objects on a single page, entirely unrelated. Children will experiment freely with color, in ways that we realistic adults might consider “wrong.” As the child's development continues, the drawing will tell a story. Children like to draw such objects as birds, trees, people, flowers, suns, houses, kites, and especially at age four and one-half, rainbows. The children will develop better fine motor control, though frequently they will revert to the more abstract drawings of their younger years.

It is important to note that the figures in drawings are used as symbols in many ways. The house will be drawn with a door and four windows, the chimney will slant off the room, and the smoke will curl up to the sky, which only covers a stripe at the top of the page. The children can look at houses and see that the chimneys do not slant, but they will continue to draw them this way. They will draw pictures of people in their family, but the figures' heights may not correspond to the actual heights of family members.

We must respect the creativity of the children. We all know the phrases to use when discussing children's art with them. “Tell me about your picture.” “I like the way you filled up your whole

paper!” “The bright colors you chose make me feel happy.” And often, when we can think of nothing else to say, “I can tell you worked very hard painting this picture.” We do not criticize the work of art. We cannot imagine saying, “What were you thinking of? A person’s arms do not grow out of her ears.” Or, “This is a horse? I would never have known that!” Because we care about the children we teach, we try to say encouraging and appropriate things to them.

Why, then, do we sometimes feel we need to direct the children to make a certain thing, especially when that thing must look like what the teacher has decided is correct? We would not want someone to present something to us, and say to us, “Make something just like this. If it doesn’t look like this, it isn’t right.” Although the children often cannot articulate their thoughts, they want to make their project their own, also. There are many times we must dictate to the children what they can do in our classroom. They have not reached the stage of development where they can play outside without fences or restrictions. They must be reminded to use indoor voices, or to use their words instead of their hands with their friends. We are gently helping them develop the interior standards by which they will live. But there are other areas where they can be allowed to do things their own way. We do not dictate what they will build with blocks. We let them have free choices among the centers of our classroom. And we should not force them to make projects that we have chosen.

Giving children patterns does not allow them to use their talents and originality. In developmental art, we give the children materials. As long as they show respect for the materials and use them appropriately, they may choose the ways they combine them, and the choices they make should be their own. We show our respect for the children by allowing them to decide what they will do with our materials. Remember that if the purpose of your art project is to make something, it is no longer art. Instead it is craft, and while craft might have its place, it is not in the preschool classroom.

SESSION II: Art and Learning

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers

Available art materials— construction paper, several colors of paint and brushes, collage materials and glue, several lumps of play dough and loose parts to create sculptures at least—anything else you wish

Individual pieces of paper

Selection of children's books

Handout: *How Can Developmental Art be Integrated into Other Areas of Learning?*

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Art activities support development in all domains
- Art is a means of expressing learning in all areas of curriculum
- Art is integrated with all aspects of literacy and school readiness

Carry over activity

As participants gather, have them tape up their examples of the various stages of art on the wall, so that others can see the various examples. Allow time for everyone to review the pages.

Discuss any questions or comments.

Art and developmental domains activity

Divide group into at least 4 small groups, and give chart paper and markers for each group. **Assign** groups the task of brainstorming examples of all the ways that art enhances development and learning in a particular developmental domain: physical; cognitive; social; and emotional. After they have completed their brainstorming, ask them to post their pages and then describe their findings in turn to the large group. Be sure they include:

Physical

- developing small muscles used for writing by holding crayons, markers, paintbrushes increasing control
- maneuvering play dough and scissors lets children learn how to coordinate the movements of two hands
- eye-hand coordination by moving brush across paper, putting paint where they want it to go
- develop visual discrimination needed for reading as they mix paints and colors, select and use collage materials, and draw
- develop spatial and body awareness
- learn to discriminate between part and whole
- develops sense of touch

Cognitive

- learn to see beauty and develop aesthetic sense
- learn to represent their ideas and experiences in a nonverbal way
- basic mathematical concepts of shape and size
- basic strategies of investigating, experimenting, taking risks
- basic science concepts of texture, form, color, changes
- enlarged vocabulary

Social

- chance to be in group but work individually
- work cooperatively on large projects
- learn to take turns and share materials
- resolve interpersonal conflicts
- develop conversational skills

Emotional

- basic satisfaction in exploring, experimenting, controlling
- positive way to express and release emotions
- chance to feel creative, live in fantasy
- develop confidence in decisions and ideas—no rules or restrictions
- first step to free expression without guilt

Discuss these and any additional ideas.

Art in the curriculum

Create art stations for participants to circulate among—an area for painting, one for collage, one for play dough sculpture, plus any other you choose. Allow ample time for participants to move about and use the materials for creation. Allow them to display completed creations. Then distribute individual sheets of paper, and ask participants to sit and brainstorm the specific experiences and learning involved with their activity that could be characterized as science, math, or language. Ask them to get very precise—for example, learning that glue must be applied to the underside of a picture and then pressed on to another surface is a principle of science. Share these ideas and **review** the additional ideas on handout *How Can Developmental Art be Integrated into other areas of Learning?*

Art and Literacy

Discuss the typical tie-ins with literacy.

- names on creations, either by children or adults—left corner, for introducing left to right, manuscript
- taking children’s dictation of their comments or stories about their creations
- requesting a picture from everyone to illustrate a field trip or class experience
- writing a book and illustrating it

Point out that children’s literature should also serve to introduce children to the concepts of illustrating a story or representing an idea with meaningful pictures, and to examples of wonderful art. **Distribute** the children’s literature for participants to examine. Have some that have the topic of original expression, such as *Bear’s Picture*, read in the first session. Have others that are examples of different kinds of art: Ezra Jack Keats and Leo Lionni for collage; Robert McCloskey for pen and ink drawings; Eric Carle for wonderful painting, etc. Plus any other well illustrated examples—wouldn’t even hurt to have a couple of “supermarket” type books to point out examples of not so great art.

Point out that introducing children to good literature is also a way of nourishing their aesthetic sense; good children’s literature should be like a children’s art gallery. Ask them to each bring a book next time that illustrates this idea.

FOR NEXT SESSION:

Remind participants to bring with them a book to illustrate the idea of good children’s literacy being like an art gallery.

How Can Creative Art Be Integrated into Other Areas of Learning?

Literacy

There are many books about art such as *The Art Book* and *Bonjour Mr. Satie* by Tommy dePaola. Other books are about artists, such as *Emma* by Wendy Kesselman or *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* by Tomie dePaola. The following books illustrate art techniques.

It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles G. Shaw, *Swimmy* or *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse* by Leo Leoni, which illustrate collage.

If you are reading a book to your class which has unusual illustrations (example: *The New Baby Calf* by Edith Newlin Chase—made of playdough), discuss them. Maybe the children would like to try these techniques.

Some books have unusual illustrations because of perspective: i.e. *Round Trip* by Ann Jonas.

These books are available from Scholastic Books.

Children might want to write a book and illustrate pictures for it. They will need adults to write their story as they dictate.

You can request a picture from everyone to illustrate a field trip or class experience. Or everyone could illustrate their family. Make copies of these books to send home. Parents love them. We start the year with a telephone book with each child's photograph, a self-portrait and the telephone number on each page. Our four-year-olds wear out the phone lines the first weekend the books go home—and the books help the parents learn who is in the classroom. Later we do books called "What I Am Thankful For," "What I Like to Do on a Rainy Day," and (because we are teaching in a church sponsored preschool) "What I Would Bring to Baby Jesus for His Birthday."

Write the child's words about his picture. There is some discussion about whether teachers should write on the picture. If you don't want to do this, write on a separate card and attach it so the child can take it home, or so it can be displayed in the classroom. Ask the child before writing on the picture.

Language Development

Talk about the art as the children are working. Build vocabulary with the art materials, as you discuss the work with the children. Talk about the colors, using the names often.

Point out textures.

Science

Use prediction: What do red and yellow make? Let them find out by mixing paints on the paper or in a cup.

For a science lesson ask the children: What happens when you put the colored leaves on the white cloth and hit them with a hammer?

If you mix more water with the paint, what will happen?

What happens when we mix flour and water? And what happens when we add tempera powder?

What happens if we add two colors?

Are there some things that are not good to paint on? Let them experiment on aluminum foil or plastic wrap, as well as tissue paper or kraft paper.

Use photosensitive paper.

What happens when you sprinkle Epsom salts on the wet paint? Or table salt.

What happens when you put a blob of paint on the paper and blow on it with a straw?

Children are learning prediction and using trial and error by trying out new ways to use their familiar materials. Prediction and trial and error will be important reading skills for them.

Learn. about the natural world by using natural materials and even collecting them.

Math

To enhance math skills the teacher might ask these questions:

How many pieces of tissue paper do you have on your paper? Which is the largest? The smallest? What are these shapes? How many places are there at the art table. Which structure is the heaviest? How can we make the wood work stay together? When the children make a repetitive pattern with pieces of construction paper or dots from markers, ask them what might come next?

Social Competence

Social development takes place at the art center. Children can work together on projects. "Please pass the glue." "How did you make that?" "Can I have the next turn?"

Fine Motor

Fine motor development is enhanced by grasping the crayon, brush, pencil or by stamping, weaving, crossing the midline. Working with clay strengthens small fingers as does using scissors.

Eye hand coordination becomes more refined as the child learns to put the paint or crayon

SESSION III: Great Ideas for the Classroom

Materials needed for this session

Chart paper and markers

ECERS or copies of pages with Item 20 Art

File cards, each with one of these words listed: paint, wood, clay and play dough, collage materials, easel

Resource books for art ideas: Claire Cherry: *Creative Art for the Developing Child*

Mary Ann Kohl: *Preschool Art; Scribble Art; Mudworks, Good Earth Art, Science Art*—all available from Gryphon House

Liz and Dick Wilmes: *Paint Without Brushes; 2's Art Experiences*, from Building Blocks Publications; and any other good ones resource books you have available

Handouts: *Ideas for Developmentally Appropriate Art*

Using the Easel

Practical tips for Using Art in the Classroom

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- ECERS-R has guidelines for excellence in the art program
- art media are open to a wide variety of uses
- resources may help teachers stimulate creativity

Introductory Activity

Facilitate a brief show and share of the books participants brought, and leave them available for more looking later.

ECERS-R Guidelines

Review the page for Item 20 Art. Pay attention to the emphasis on individual expression and time for availability of art materials, as well as items under excellent and the questions. Ask participants to score themselves on the basis of their current classroom practices.

Brainstorming With Materials

Distribute the file cards to small groups. Ask the participants to brainstorm as many ideas as possible of the way that art medium can be used—they can add ideas about utensils or needed materials to complete the descriptions. Have one participant in each group record their ideas on chart paper. As they are running out of ideas, distribute the Handouts *Ideas for Developmentally appropriate Art* and *Using the Easel*, and allow them to find more ideas to add to their lists. Post the lists, and share some of their ideas in the large group.

Resources

Distribute the resources books. Allow time (10-15 minutes) for participants to peruse them and note down interesting ideas. Allow time for several to be shared.

Practical Tips

Review and discuss the ideas on the handout *Practical Tips for Using Art in the Classroom*. Encourage participants to share any additional useful ideas they have discovered.

Wrap up

Challenge each participant to find one idea from either the ideas about using media or the practical tips that they can try out in their own classroom before the next session, and come prepared to describe their experience briefly.

Ideas for Creative Art

The Art Table

On the art table in our classroom, we generally have one or two areas with various materials available for art. We usually have two children working at each station. You might want one person stations for younger children so they do not have to share supplies. You could set up as many places as you like with one or two different types of media.

Making tracks

Allow the children to drive toy trucks through a small amount of tempera paint in a tray, and then roll the trucks across paper. Choose trucks with tires that have an interesting tread.

Rolling marbles

Use a box with paper in the bottom. We like boxes that are about two to three inches deep. Cut pieces of construction paper to fit the bottom of the box. Put tempera paint in a margarine tub or other small tub. Use colors for the paper and the paint that are brightly contrasting. Put a marble in the tub of paint, fish it out with a spoon and put it in the box. Allow the children to move the box back and fourth, making the marble roll across the paper, and leaving its track. Here's one place where you may have to have a teacher close to the art table to help with dipping the marble in the paint.

Rolling doggie chew toy

This is like the rolling marbles, but instead of marbles, use a doggie chew toy that is shaped like a ball with spikes all over it. It leaves an interesting dotted print as it rolls across the paper.

Utensil Prints

Use various kitchen utensils to make prints on construction paper. Possibilities which work well are spring whisks, potato mashers, etc. The spring whisk is the most popular in our classroom. It is such fun to make it go boing! boing! on the paper. Have a small tray with a shallow layer of paint. Dip the utensil in the paint, then print with it on contrasting paper. To make a more intricate print, save the papers, and print again in a contrasting color the next day.

More things to print with

At the hardware store, look for items that would make interesting prints. We use sink stoppers, the sort that attaches to a chain. These leave circles on the paper. Carpet protectors that go under furniture legs to protect the carpet work very well to make prints. Choose the ones that have little spiky points on them to make an intriguing pattern.

Finger Painting

Mix liquid starch with your tempera powder or liquid (powder works best) and use it for finger painting. You can put the finger paint on a tray, and let the children enjoy it. When they are through playing with it, put a piece of paper down on the paint in the tray, pat it down lightly, and then pull it off. You now have a print, and the children will be amazed and delighted! If regulations permit, spray some shaving cream on the tray and sprinkle tempera paint on it. Let the children mix the shaving cream and the paint, and again make a print. It is also fun to cut a

piece of bubble wrap to fit the tray and finger paint on the bubble wrap. If you wet the back of the bubble wrap, it will stay on the tray better.

Shiny Paint

Mix food coloring with Karo white corn syrup. The result is a shiny paint that looks varnished. You can also make shiny paint with tempera and sweetened condensed milk.

***Goofy Goop**

This material has many names, but no matter what you call it, the children will love it! Make it by mixing

- 1 C. white glue (like Elmer's)
- 1 C. water
- food coloring to the desired shade

in a large bowl.

In a separate bowl, mix

- 1 C. water
- 1 Tablespoon Borax (you can purchase this in a grocery store in the laundry detergents area).

Make sure the Borax is dissolved.

Then pour the Borax mixture into the glue mixture. You will have a large blob of Goofy Goop in water. Lift it out, and enjoy it. Be sure to store in an airtight container.

IDEAS FOR THREE DIMENSIONAL ART

Three dimensional art is important to preschooler's development. Math skills in particular are enhanced by the use of three-dimensional materials. Researchers believe one reason boys often seem to have better math skills than girls is their extensive three-dimensional play in blocks when they are young. Eye-hand coordination, spatial orientation and other skills are developed using three-dimensional media.

Play Dough

There are many inexpensive materials which children can use for modeling. Homemade playdough is probably the one seen most in the preschool classroom. It is easy to make by using this recipe:

Mix together in a saucepan:

- 2 cups plain flour (not self rising)
- 2 cups cold water
- 1 cups salt
- 3-5 tablespoons cream of tarter (available at the grocery store in the spice section)
- 4 tablespoons of vegetable oil or baby oil (this give a good smell!)

food coloring

Stir well and cook over medium heat until the mixture pulls away from the side of the pan. It will start to have a dry look to it. Place on a counter or board and knead for a good texture. Store in an airtight container, such as a Cool Whip carton, or Zip Loc bag.

Be sure to discard frequently, especially if there are colds in the classroom.

We keep this mixture out every day. Using play dough strengthens the small muscles in the fingers and hand which will be used for writing. If you put scissors in the play dough, the children will practice cutting. Plastic knives (watch to make sure they do not have serrated edges, which can cut little fingers), cookie cutters in universal shapes (circles, diamonds, hearts, ovals) and garlic presses (for older children) encourage creativity. Remember that the child who participates in using playdough is participating in an art activity.

Sawdust clay

Sawdust mixed with white school glue makes an intriguing medium for molding. It will dry hard, and can be painted.

Uncooked play dough

You can allow older children to make their own play dough by giving them flour (on a tray) and allowing them to mix water into it. They will quickly learn whether they need more flour or water to make the consistency right. After they are pleased with their product, allow them to mix tempera powder into it to color it. They will be amazed at what can happen when they mix red and blue, or blue and yellow. And they are learning to predict, to experiment, and they are strengthening their muscles. Of course, this dough will not last more than one or two days, unless it is refrigerated. We send it home right away to share with parents.

Styrofoam building

Building with Styrofoam is another way to encourage three-dimensional art. Twos and threes can hammer nails into Styrofoam, using wooden hammers. They will enjoy fastening pieces together. Here is one place where you will need a lot of supervision! Help the children learn how to start the nails by pressing into the Styrofoam, and then hammer them home. Styrofoam hammering is probably best as a one-person station for these younger children. Older children (late threes, fours and fives) will enjoy not only hammering the styrofoam pieces, but also gluing them with white glue. They can cut the pieces with plastic knives which are serrated. You will need to provide supervision so the children use the plastic knives in an appropriate way.

Woodworking

Woodworking is a great center for older preschoolers. You can allow the children to actually hammer nails into pine blocks. Gluing is another way to make three-dimensional structures, but the children must realize that the glue takes some time to dry. Ask a local lumber company to allow you to go through their scrap pile for pieces of wood, but be sure to pass up any treated lumber. The chemicals used to treat it make it unsafe for the children. Popsicle sticks and tongue depressors are also good materials for gluing, and you can also find small pieces of balsa wood, cut into circles, ovals and other universal shapes. These also work well in the collage bucket. You can paint the wooden structures with tempera paint.

Earth clay

Earth clay is a marvelous medium, and children love to work with it. You can get great slabs of clay from school supply stores or potteries. Use a thread or wire to cut it into appropriate sizes, and encourage the children to knead it, and even slam it down on the table to get out any air bubbles. A little water makes the clay softer and gives it an interesting texture. A mixture of clay and water, which potters call “slip” will smooth the surface, and can be used as a glue to attach pieces of clay together. Encourage the children to mold out of the main piece of clay however whenever possible. When the piece dries, small attachments tend to fall off. Clay can be painted with tempera paint when it is dry.

Three dimensional paper art

Fours and fives enjoy three dimensional paper art. They can be shown how to twist paper and glue both ends down, leaving the middle to bow up, like a bridge. Tell them to count to ten while they hold the glued ends down. Accordion pleated paper makes an interesting look when the ends are glued. It is appropriate to show children how to curl paper around a pencil and glue one end down. We call this sort of art “strip art” because we use strips of paper to glue down. A paper shredder is ideal for cutting this paper.

Weaving

Children love ribbons and lace, and will enjoy using these for weaving. The younger children need a base for weaving with large holes, such as the orange net that is used to block off construction sites. Chicken wire is good for threes or fours, as is rabbit wire. Be sure to tape the sides of the wire. There is some tape that is brightly colored, and makes an attractive border for the weaving as well as protecting little fingers. The wire can also be made into a cylinder for weaving. Just be sure to bend over all sharp ends. Use large eye plastic needlepoint needles, available in the knitting yarn section of your variety store to use for threading ribbon through the rabbit wire, or stiffen the ends of your ribbon, lace, fabric strips, yarn, etc. by dipping them in white glue and allowing them to dry. It’s like a built in needle. You may need to help the children knot their material around the wire to keep it from pulling through as they weave.

Weaving is a good way to encourage cooperative play, as two children can work on one large piece of construction net, or chicken wire. At the end of the day, the ribbons, etc. can be pulled out of the wire and used again the next day. We like to use smaller pieces of wire for individual weaving, which we usually send home. It is fun to use feathers on these small pieces of wire.

Sometimes we wrap regular wire like thin picture wire (not chicken or rabbit wire) around a piece of cardboard, making a grid of horizontal wires for items to be woven in and out of. Usually this is an individual project.

There are many commercial media which can be purchased for the children to use, but if you only have wood, Styrofoam, play dough and earth clay, and paper for your class, you will have ample opportunities for important learning using three-dimensional materials.

USING THE EASEL

It is important for the easel to be available to every child every day. If your classroom has a double-sided easel, two children can work at the same time. By having two children at the easel, you are promoting communication skills as they compare their work. They will often work cooperatively. A side-by-side easel promotes conversation and cooperation.

It is usually best to start the school year with only one color at each easel place, especially for toddlers, twos and threes. Even with fours or fives, you will probably want to start with only two colors. Teach the children to wipe their brushes on the cup before painting. If you are using powdered tempera paint, you can mix it with a good dishwashing detergent, such as Ivory or Dawn so it will have a thick texture. When the paint is thick, it drips less.

Varied materials for the easel

- Try using watercolors at the easel.
- Use different kinds of paper: newsprint, construction paper, even newspaper or brown Kraft paper, which you can cut from paper bags!
- Try using paper with a hole cut out of it. You will be surprised at the results. Some children will paint around the hole, while others will only paint *in* the hole! We back our hole with newspaper.
- Offer different size brushes. For older children, smaller brushes will allow more control. Offer a variety.
- Offer small paint rollers.

Hang a collage bucket from the easel. Any plastic bucket will work as long as it has a handle or holes for a string. Here are things to put in the collage bucket that you hang from the easel. All of these materials will stick to tempera paint when it is wet, and the children quickly learn to daub a little paint on their picture when they want material to stick.

- squares, circles and triangles of construction paper or of tissue paper,
- crinkled paper from gift wrap
- short lengths of the strips of paper that is torn off computer printer paper (the sort with holes in it)
- hole punch waste
- metallic paper shapes
- strips of construction paper, sequins (especially the large shaped sequins)
- yarn lengths (especially the fat yarn)
- feathers
- small craft type pieces of thin wood, or natural materials such as leaves or sticks, sweet gum balls, and seeds
- cut out pictures of animals from magazines
- flower pictures and even pictures of art masterpieces from museum catalogues
- various sorts of stamps, especially the stamps from charitable organizations, such as Christmas seals

When parents know the sorts of things you use, they will keep their eyes out for materials. One teacher had two boys who were not at all interested in sitting down at a table to draw or paint. When she suggested they work at the easel, they started using the collage materials, and were occupied for about twenty minutes, each making a collage which covered a piece of construction paper. Their goal was to empty the collage bucket, and the result was two lovely pieces of art to hang on the walls of the classroom. The art pieces were later sent home to parents who had both told the teacher, “My son is not interested in art.”

Collage work promotes visual discrimination, as well as fine motor control and decision-making. If you are working with younger children, you will want your collage materials to be larger, for their tiny fingers, but even two-year-olds enjoy collage. When pictures are heavily layered in collage, the pieces will sometimes fall off when the paint is dry. To prevent this, squeeze Elmer’s school glue over the collage to hold it on. Since it dries clear, it does not affect the aesthetics of the art. Do this after the children have left for the day to avoid having them think we are “correcting” their work.

Of course, sometimes you will have a child who will paint at the easel, add collage, paint over her choices, add more collage, and then more paint. Often the result is a muddy brown paper that seems to weigh about two pounds. Remember, for the child, it is the process that is important, not the product that is the result. Learning comes from choosing colors, selecting collage, deciding how to place it, using more colors. **Parent education** is important in this situation, so parents will realize that so much learning is taking place. It is sometimes hard for the teachers to bite their tongues when a painting reaches what they consider perfection. But we have to respect what the child is doing!

Practical Tips for Using Art in the Classroom

1. Mix tempera paint powder with dishwashing soap, such as Dawn, for a better texture, and to insure the paints will wash out of clothes. Note: purple paint is the worst to stain, but the children can understand this and be extra careful with purple.
2. Make supplies easily available to children. If they can get the scissors, glue, crayons, old magazines and paper, it will keep creativity flowing at the art area.
3. A shoe bag can organize many small items.
4. Suspend a collage bucket from the easel with a cup hook or S-hook.
5. Frozen food trays from frozen dinners can hold paint, small items.
6. Work on trays to make it easier to contain mess.
7. A lazy Susan or compartmentalized tray can offer many options for collage, such as tissue paper squares, colored paper squares, feathers, confetti, computer paper strips, glitter, squares of foil gift wrap to use at the art table.
8. Cut pictures out of seed catalogues, bird magazines, art catalogues to use in collage.
9. Use small amounts of paint so they don't get muddy from being mixed.
10. The younger your children are, the fewer colors of paint you should make available. Also remember to start out the year with fewer colors. For fours, one color on the easel is appropriate for the first week of school.
11. Use tubes of watercolor instead of pans of watercolor. Mix in small cups with individual brushes. The tubes are more expensive initially, but will last much longer than the pans, and also do not get muddy from mixing. If the watercolor in the cup dries out, just add more water!
12. Remember to use brown or black paper and paint. We do not want to teach the children that black and brown are not as pretty colors as the rest of the palette.
13. Treat the children's artwork with respect. Mat it carefully, hang it straight on the bulletin board, and if you must throw away a piece of children's art, make sure they never know you have done so!
14. Dip ends of the ribbons and yarn that you are using for weaving into white glue and allow to dry. The glue stiffens the ends and makes it easier to weave.

15. Don't make every child do every art project you put out. Some children never choose to do art at the table. Take pictures of their block or Lego structures or their sandcastles. These are art also. Some children can't bear to get their hands messy. They will be happier with crayons or markers than with finger paint.
16. Grow grass in a pot or tray and allow the children to cut it with scissors. Even children who don't like art will enjoy this activity and it helps develop scissor skills.
17. Always remember, safety first! Use materials that are non-toxic and safe for the children to use. Toddlers, twos and threes will put materials in their mouths. Children who are still in an oral stage often love the taste of play dough (it's salty!). We should discourage this oral activity. Make sure the children are safe!
18. Don't use food as art material. Finger painting with chocolate pudding sounds like fun, but the lesson it teaches is that it is fine to waste food. Also there is no way to prevent contamination when foodstuffs are used by several children. And we must be sensitive to the fact that some of our children may come from homes in which there is not enough food. We do not want to teach them to waste food.
19. Markers are fun to use, but crayons are more appropriate for developing the muscles children will need for writing. On some days, you will want to put out crayons only; on other days offer a choice.
20. Remember, if it takes a teacher sitting at the art table, giving step by step directions, it's not developmental!

SESSION IV: Communicating Respect for Children's Art

Materials needed for this session

Chart paper and markers

Grab bag and questions

Handouts: *Helping Parents Understand and Appreciate Developmentally Appropriate Art Talking About Art*

Frequently Asked Questions

Poster board, rulers, pencils, etc

Concepts to emphasize during this session

- Parent education regarding developmental art is a teacher role
- Many teacher concerns and questions about art are solved with parent education
- Teachers need to practice communication skills related to art to convey respect for the process

Introductory Activity

Ask participants to share—briefly, in small groups-- some of their experiences with the challenge they selected for themselves at the end of the last session.

Communicating with children about art

Assign one or more of the scenarios on the Handout *Talking about art* to each pair of participants. Ask them to brainstorm together to come up with most appropriate ways of communicating. Then have each pair role play the scenario and their best response to the whole group.

Discuss the key points as exemplified by the responses chosen:

- comments to focus on individualized process, not product.
- comments not evaluative, but appreciative
- comments to follow children's lead and goals

Communicating With Parents About Art

Facilitate a discussion about typical parent concerns and questions regarding children's art. Include such ideas as: "what is it?" "why doesn't my child make a picture every day?" "why do you do such messy things?", etc.

Distribute and review Handout *Helping Parents Understand and Appreciate Developmentally Appropriate Art*. **Discuss** ways participants have already communicated with parents to help them understand children's art, and which ways they might try in the future.

Distribute poster-making materials to small groups, and give these instructions:

Make a poster to educate parents about what children learn in the art area. This poster could be posted in an art area as a reminder to all about the value of creative art experiences. Remember that too much information can be confusing and hard to read in a poster. Keep the wording brief and the writing large enough so that it can be easily read from a distance. Illustrate as you wish.

Ask groups to hang their posters when completed so all can appreciate.

Concluding Activity: Grab Bag of Questions

Trainer will have prepared a small bag with the questions only from the handout *Frequently Asked Questions*. Have participants take turns drawing a question to read to the group. Anyone in the group may make comments or contribute to the discussion about this. Then later refer to the answers provided on the handout. Continue until all the questions are answered.

Talking About Art

Read the scenarios below. Plan how you would talk with the child, to make appropriate comments about the process you are observing.

1. Child painting at easel. She has filled whole paper with blue paint, and has in fact rubbed a hole in the paper as she continues to paint.
2. Child playing with play dough says, “Will you make me a dinosaur? I don’t know how.”
3. Child holds up to you a paper with crayoning—mostly circles and scribbles—in red and blue crayon.
4. Child working for a long time with markers and paper. You see no clear shapes on paper.
5. Child says, “Mary’s making an ugly picture,” about child painting beside her.
6. Child says, “Look at my dog.”
7. Child frustrated because she can’t get the color she wants from the watercolor paints.
8. Child rolling lots of balls with play dough.
9. Child painted a picture of a sun and tree, then covered it all over with brown paint.
10. Child says, “I don’t want to make a picture for my Mommy.”

Frequently Asked Questions

What about Christmas and other holidays? How can my art go along with the seasons?

Believe it or not, this is probably the first question I am asked at every workshop. But fortunately there is an easy answer. The main way in which the art reflects the season is in the colors that the teacher chooses. At Halloween, put out the orange and black paint, and use circles. The children may or may not choose to paint pumpkins, but your art is still developmental. At Christmas you can put out green and red, as well as white paint. Use triangle or pennant shapes. If the children want to make Christmas trees, fine. If they don't, fine! Valentine's Day is a snap, since hearts are a developmental shape. By the way, I like to put black hearts out as well as red, white, pink, and purple. Our valentines are mailed to a nearby Veteran's Hospital for the "poor, sick soldiers" as the children refer to them! In the spring everyone wants to use pastel colors. At Easter time we use oval shapes, and sometimes they turn into eggs. Frankly, I think our worries about seasonal themes comes from trying to please parents. With excellent parent education, we can continue to be developmentally appropriate.

Do I have to have something different at the art center every day?

No! No! No! Do you ever read a story more than once, when a child requests it? Do you sing a song more than once? Do you tell a child, "You played with that puzzle already. You can't use it again." Of course not. You can have the same materials out two or three days running, if the interest is high. Or bring out a favorite medium after a break of several days. The children are growing and will use the same materials in new and different ways. You are allowing them to demonstrate their growth and to feel secure as they experiment. We always have pla-do out every day.

Do I have to have every child make something everyday?

We want our children to have something to take home to show their parents every day, but that is a teacher directed desire, not a child centered one. Parents of children who are not interested in conventional art activities understand that they will not have as many products to hang on their refrigerator. It is our place to help them understand that their child is learning in other ways. As the mother of a preschooler who never painted at the easel, I understand this problem from both sides. But it is best to let children choose when they will participate in the art activities. If you feel a child is hanging back through shyness, or is intimidated, you might say, "It's your turn to paint at the easel now." But even with this encouragement a child may not choose to paint. And that's OK!

How can I keep from having such a mess in my classroom after art?

The children should be able to learn to clean up after themselves. If they finish their work and leave the table in a mess, call them back to clean it up. Explain that no one wants to work when the art table is messy, so they have a responsibility to help clean it up so their friends can use it. Use papers to cover the table if it gets too messy, or sheets of plastic or an old shower curtain under the easel. Plan ahead. If the children make a mess with three colors of paint, cut back to two. But remember that art is messy. Crayons and paper is neat and simple to clean up, but by limiting materials you are limiting learning. Make clean up as easy as possible by letting the children put the art materials on easily accessible shelves.

Should I make children leave the art center after a certain time?

This is a difficult question. There are children who love art, and will get so involved in a project that they will stay all morning. If you have several children waiting for a turn, and no station for them to work, you may have to say to such a child, "You must finish up your work quickly, so others may have a turn. If you would like to, you may save your work, and add to it tomorrow." Usually this situation resolves itself as the materials are put out again and again. If you can let children limit their own time in the center, as in any center, it is better for them. But learning to take turns is important for preschoolers also.

What can I do about Christmas and other gifts for parents?

Here we are dealing with craft, not art. We are intentionally making a product. It is the point of the activity, and children do love to have a gift to give their parents. But we do not need to throw our developmentally appropriate guidelines out the window. Handprints are always special to parents. You can make them out of earth clay, or put them on a ceramic tile which you can then fire, if the budget will allow. Remember to always put the child's name and the year on the gift. For Mother's Day, we often make pins for moms. We take old cardboard puzzle pieces and spray paint them metallic gold. Then we put them on the art table with glue and various kinds of glitter. Our children will spend a long time covering the puzzle pieces with the glitter, and we then glue a pin on the back. Our mothers often wear their pins to our Mother's Day celebration, a snack lunch. Footprints are also fun to give. In the spring or summer is a good time to make footprints. They are a nice change from handprints, and make a special gift for fathers. One year we were given a lot of wooden frames. That year our gift was a framed piece of art which we made by dropping watercolor on water color paper (it's expensive, but we cut each sheet into four pieces) and blowing it with a straw. Another year we had cardboard frames which we sprayed gold again, and again decorated with glitter. We put photos in these, and gave them for presents. Last year at Christmas we made garden stepping stones. We pour concrete in aluminum cake pans, and the children smoothed out the concrete and decorated the surface with various stones. I am not sure we will do this again. It was a lot of work! But the parents loved

it—and, most important, it was developmentally appropriate art! So, as you can see, there are ideas that are appropriate for gifts, and continue to teach the children.

Do I have to make the children wear smocks to paint?

I do not like to require the children to wear smocks. We explain this to parents at the first of the year. Our paint is mixed with soap to make it easier to wash out. Some children want to wear a smock, especially if they are wearing something special (and Mother has said, “Keep your new dress clean.”) So they are an option, but not a requirement in our class. We encourage play clothes for school. We do ask that all parents send a complete change of clothes in case of an accident of any kind. If children get paint on themselves, they will sometimes want to change their clothes, and we want this option available for them.

A Final Note

We must always remember that we are teachers, not tellers. We need to let children discover things for themselves whenever possible. Our job is to observe our children and make deliberate choices about what materials are appropriate to put out each day. We facilitate their learning, and we delight in it. We are part of the most important profession in the world, helping children grow into confident, self-directed, caring citizens for our country. We should all be awarded medals, but we will settle for sticky hugs and kisses.

USING LANGUAGE TO DEVELOP REASONING SKILLS

Developed for ASU Childhood Services
By Carol Gestwicki

This training is organized into four sessions, each lasting 30-45 minutes. The purpose of the training is to help teachers grow in their skills of using language to help children develop reasoning skills. In addition to the 4 sessions, there are suggested activities for the participants to do between the sessions. Directions for trainers are noted in **bold**. It would probably be useful for trainers to read all of this module from ASU Childhood Services on “Using Language to Develop Reasoning Skills”, in order to refresh their background knowledge of Piaget, Vygotsky, brain development, etc.

Outline of Sessions

- I. How Children Develop Thinking and Reasoning Skills
- II. Asking Good Questions
- III. Materials that Promote Reasoning
- IV. Conversations toward Thinking

SESSION I: How Children Develop Thinking and Reasoning Skills

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers
Individual papers for group recorders
Puzzles
ECERS-R or pages for Item 17
Handouts *An Activity About Shoes*
Do an Inventory
Straws and masking tape, enough for 2-3 group construction
Clear plastic pitcher and cup

Concepts to emphasize during this session

- Children construct their own understanding and knowledge
- Adults support and facilitate development of reasoning skills
- Reasoning comes as children make connections between experiences

Introductory Activity

Have participants work on putting an assortment of puzzles together, either individually or in pairs. When they are finished, **point out** that they were just using reasoning skills—figuring out where pieces go based on shape and picture. **Outline** the goals of this training, and what will be covered in the four sessions. This first session is to reinforce their understanding of how children develop thinking and reasoning skills, and the adult’s role in supporting this.

Activity About Shoes

Divide participants into small groups of 4, no more than 5. Have each group designate a reader, to read the various parts of the instructions, and one to be a recorder, to write down the group responses to each of the tasks. **Distribute** one copy of Handout *Activity about shoes* to the reader in each group, and remind participants to follow instructions exactly. After all groups have finished discussing the last questions, **discuss** their findings in the large group, listing them on chart paper.

Include these points.

- need for activity for real minds-on engagement—lecture is passive learning
- learning as social experience (Vygotsky)
- reasoning skills involve drawing mental conclusions based on perceptions etc. from group

ECERS on Using Language to Develop Reasoning Skills

Distribute and discuss Item 17 in ECERS-R. Here we are considering how particular teacher strategies and interactions can enhance the thinking and reasoning abilities of young children.

Points to make

- Evidence of inadequate performance includes staff that do not talk with children about the connections they are trying to make in the world (1.1) they may ignore their questions or curiosity about how things happen in the world about them, perhaps feeling that all those questions are interrupting the teacher's plans or just don't need answering. They may not use opportunities to call children's attention to the things about them, such as the fact that story time always follows snack time in the morning schedule, or that all the blocks are red, but some are shaped like squares and others like triangles.
- 1.2 Talks about teachers who introduce concepts either too soon for children to be able to comprehend them, or by using methods that are not recognized as best ways for children to learn, such as worksheets rather than concrete materials. Thus formal academic instruction is seen as an inadequate method for nurturing children's logical thinking.
- Better practices seen under good. 5.1-Teachers take the lead in talking about children's discoveries while children have the opportunity to play with materials that stimulate their reasoning. The materials in the classroom that promote cognitive development include items that can be sorted according to size and shape, same or different or other attributes, games that use math and numbers, and cards that allow children to figure out the sequence of events. Hands-on, concrete experiences help children understand an idea through their senses; language supplied by the adult gives labels to put on the concepts.
- 5.2. Teachers show their recognition of stimulating cognitive growth when they encourage children to explain their reasoning as they work to solve problems. Children's reasoning becomes more mature as they have the opportunities to form their thoughts and hear them expressed out loud. As teachers gain insights into children's thinking process, they know what kinds of experiences might next support children's growing understanding.

- 7.1. Excellent teacher performance in helping children grow in reasoning skills is shown by teachers' regular and frequent emphasis on children's reasoning, as they use daily events and experiences to help children form new ideas and make mental connections. For example, the wall chart that pictures the predictable sequence of the daily schedule helps children understand the idea of order, or the following of the recipe card pictures in a cooking experience supports the connections of cause and effect.
- 7-2. Excellent teachers respond to children's interests or needs by introducing concepts when children show the need for new information. "Teachable moments" occur when children need help with solving a problem, such as finding the number of spoons needed to set a place for everyone at the table, or making a structure stand up. As teachers support the development of new knowledge needed for a successful experience, children are likely to understand within the context, rather than when concepts are introduced before they are meaningful to the child or with no connection to real experiences.

Ask participants to rate themselves on how they are doing on this item.

Scaffolding Activity

Form participants into groups of 5-8. Each group stands around a table. Put a package of drinking straws and a roll of masking tape on each table.

Give the assignment:

The task is to build the tallest tower you can, using only the straws and masking tape. The tower must be freestanding—it cannot be taped to the table or anything else. The group has 1 minute to plan the strategy, but cannot put together any straws or touch the masking tape during the one-minute thinking time. Then have 10 minutes to build.

Give 1 minute planning time, and then say, I forgot to tell you that you will not be able to talk to one another during this activity. Now you have 10 minutes to build.

Call time after 10 minutes and process experience.

Point out connection to Vygotsky's theory—idea that individual constructs own knowledge, and that personal and social experience cannot be separated—co-construction. Children learn from interactions with other people. Adult role is that of scaffolder—to help child reach learning he could not do alone. Contrary to this experience, adult's vehicle for working with child is language used to focus child's experience and help draw new conclusion.

Conclusion

Thought to leave them with:

Prepare a pitcher with some water and a cup, and have available one of the puzzles used in beginning activity. Pour some water into the empty cup. **Say** that this is to represent the way teachers saw their role when they believed that children learn by being told—the pitcher is the adult who knows things, and the child is the empty cup to fill up with knowledge. But when teachers understand that the way children learn is by constructing their own knowledge through experience and interaction with others, this is better represented by a puzzle, where children actively work to try to connect new pieces to the picture they have already put together. Here the teacher role is to guide the child with language to where that next piece might fit.

FOR NEXT SESSION: **Distribute** handout *Do an Inventory*, and ask participants to think about these questions before next session. Also ask participants to bring an interesting object with them to the next session—for example, an unusual kitchen utensil, or natural object.

Activity About Shoes

1. Reader will read only 1 task at a time to the group. After group has completed all instructions for first activity, reader will read next task, and so on.
2. The group should sit in a circle. Without looking at it or demonstrating it, one volunteer should deliver a mini-lecture about one of her shoes, describing it in great detail. Other participants are just to listen, not to look at the shoe. Recorder writes down the details. When finished with this, the reader can read the instructions for the next task.
3. Another volunteer takes off one of her shoes and places it on the table where everyone in the group can see, but not touch, it. That individual will talk about her shoe. The recorder writes down the details. When this task is complete, the reader reads the instructions for the next task.
4. All participants are to sit on the floor and each take off one shoe, placing them in a group in the middle of the circle. All participants will now explore the shoes, using any sense they choose. They can all contribute comments about the shoes, pointing out similarities and dissimilarities. They should explore what they can make or do with all the shoes. The recorder keeps track of their contributions and ideas. When this task is completed, the reader reads the next instruction.
5. As a group discuss:
 - in which of these three activities did you learn the most about shoes?
 - which was most enjoyable? Least enjoyable?
 - in which were you most actively engaged in thinking?
 - big ideas?

When finished, share some of these thoughts in the large group.

Do An Inventory

Spend some time thinking about the way your classroom environment and daily schedule does or does not support time for regular conversation with your children.

Indicator	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
I have large blocks of time when children are engaged in their work. Where you can be fairly free to observe children at play and interact with them.			
I keep classroom background noise low, only occasionally playing quiet music, so that voices can be heard easily.			
I sit beside children at play, so that I convey the impression of openness and availability for communication.			
I listen carefully when children speak, so that children see that their language is valued and that responses are appropriate			
I listen carefully when children speak, so that children see that their language is valued and that responses are appropriate.			
I encourage children to listen carefully and respectfully to one another.			
I begin conversations during routine times such as mealtimes, restroom times, and when waiting for activities to begin.			
I follow children's lead in talking about things that interest them.			
I practice asking open-ended questions.			
I plan circle time activities that include opportunities for children listening and speaking.			
I devise systems that insure I have a conversation with each child every day.			

SESSION II: Asking Good Questions

Materials need for this session

Chart paper and markers

Handout *What kind of questions are these?*

Practice good questions

Inventory of concept materials

Nerf ball

Concepts to emphasize in this session

- good questions encourage divergent thinking and reasoning skills
- good questions are generally open-ended
- asking good questions is a skill that can be practiced.

Introductory Activity

Read aloud the following story and discuss importance of questions to promote reasoning skills. A scientist who received the Nobel Prize to reward his lifetime accomplishments and discoveries once told this story when asked to explain his success. “My mother, like most other mothers of immigrant families in Brooklyn in the early part of the 1900’s, was always eager to greet us when we came home from school. The usual question from most of those mothers was, ‘What did you learn today?’ My mother, though, asked, ‘Did you ask a good question today?’ And that made all the difference. From my earliest memories I was encouraged to be curious, to wonder, to take initiative in finding connections in my world.”

This is a wonderful, true story of the lifelong impact of an adult who knew the importance of supporting curiosity and encouraging a child to make sense of the world around him.

Asking good questions is one of the best ways adults can guide children to making new connections in their understanding. Today we concentrate on good questions.

Closed vs. Open Question

Ask participants to place their interesting objects on the table in front of them. **Borrow** one interesting object. Then rattle off a series of closed questions about it—get the answer, then ask the next question:

- examples: what is this? what color is it? Is it big or small? Is it hard? What letter does it start with? does it make a noise when you bang it? do you have one of these at your house? Any others that seem appropriate. By the way, when you get a response, reply “Correct” or “Right” or “Yes” (or no).

Then move into asking open questions, such as:

- What does this remind you of? What do you think this could be used for? What else? What else could you find in the kitchen that people sometimes use? I wonder how this got so shiny? What does that sound like? How does that feel to you? How do you think that grew? etc. or whatever is appropriate to the object you borrowed. Respond with comments such as “That’s an interesting idea” or “Good thinking.”

Discuss differences between open and closed questions, listing in 2 columns on chart paper. Include:

- one right answer, vs. many possibilities—divergent thinking—no one answer
- closed requires simple recall of something already learned, open requires higher level thinking, making connections, mentally reconstructing past experiences
- closed don’t require much conversation—one word answers—yes, red, etc.
- open may lead to much more language and extended communication opportunities, etc.
- closed often designed just to see what child knows—open are designed to get insights into child’s thinking and support making logical connections

Distribute Handout *What kind of questions are these?* for pairs to analyze together. **Discuss** any questions.

Practice Good Questions

Discuss what is a good question:

- open-ended and divergent, able to be answered with any number of responses, not just looking for one right answer.
- question to which adult does not know answer—otherwise questions may just be an intrusion and close off real thinking and communication. Therefore good questions begin with teachers' genuine curiosity, their desire to know what children think.
- good questions cause children to analyze their experiences, to synthesize and communicate their understandings, to re-evaluate, probe, and deepen their developing concepts.
- often good questions begin with “wh”, such as “What, who, when, where, why, and how?”

Distribute Handout *Practice Good Questions*. Ask participants to work in pairs, with each helping the other to create a list of good questions to promote thinking about the interesting object they brought to class. When finished, share good questions round-robin.

Remind participants that sometimes questions should be used to answer questions when children ask a question, rather than simply supplying the information. More thinking results when teachers respond to the first question with one of their own. For example: “What’s that?” “What do you think it could be?”, etc.

Conclusion

Toss a Nerf ball around a circle. When a participant gets the ball, this is the opportunity to share a sentence about an idea to take away from today’s session and how it may affect their interaction with children.

NEXT SESSION: **Distribute** *Inventory of Concept Materials* for participants to complete in their classrooms.

What Kind of Questions Are These?

1. Are you a girl or a boy?
2. Do you like apple juice?
3. What is your favorite juice?
4. Who else do you know is a boy?
5. Would you like apple or orange juice?
6. Did you like story?
7. What part of the story did you like best?
8. What color is this?
9. How many blocks did you stack up?
10. What color are bananas?
11. I wonder what makes the yellow color in banana skin.
12. Where do you think birds sleep at night?
13. What would happen if we forgot to eat breakfast?
14. Who lives in your house?
15. What tastes the sweetest—salt or sugar?
16. What's the sweetest thing you ever tasted?
17. How old are you?
18. How old are people when they're really old?
19. Who came to the Three Bears' House?
20. I wonder how Goldilocks felt when she woke up?

Practice Good Questions

1. Think of a question that might help a child verbalize what she notices with her senses as she explores the item. Write it down. Is your question a “wh” question? If not, can you reframe it so that it is more open-ended? Could these be several responses to this question?

Think of possible responses and formulate a reply that allows you to expand on the answer by adding a new idea or other words.

2. Now think of a question that may challenge the child to explore the item further. Hint: sometimes these questions begin with “I wonder what...?” Or “How do you think...?”
3. Now think of a question that may cause the child to mentally reconstruct past experiences and relate it to this learning, seeing, for example, if they can remember anything else that reminds them of this object, or other things they have seen people use.
4. Now put the two objects in your pair together and think of questions that will encourage children to put the two objects into some kind of relationship—perhaps your question will encourage them to notice similarities and differences.

Now assume one answer you might get to that question. Plan a follow-up question that help the child connect this idea with something they already know, or create a discrepancy between some earlier understandings. For example, if the child points out that one utensil is shinier than the other, the follow-up question could be “How do you think you could get the other one to be more shiny?”

5. Now plan a question that could cause the child to create a theory about the purpose of the object, and another that would promote consideration of how the object developed or was made.

Check to be sure all your questions are open-ended, with many possible answers.

Inventory of Concept Materials

Since we know that children learn much about concepts by using materials in the classroom, along with conversation with adults and others about these materials, it is time to consider the materials you currently have available to children on a daily basis that promote conceptual learning.

Type of Materials	How Many?	List Materials That You Have
Collections of materials that can be grouped according to particular attributes, such as shape, color, size, classification, such as farm and zoo animal figures, family figures, plastic chips of various sizes and colors, collections of sensory materials	[List number of collections]	[List collections]
Good quality puzzles, with varying numbers and shapes of pieces and pictures		[List concepts introduced by puzzles]
Sets of open-ended manipulative and construction materials for problem solving		
Games that introduce simple number concepts, such as Candyland or Spill the Beans		
Games that introduce simple matching concepts, such as Memory or Dominoes		
Shape sorters		
Interesting objects displayed around the room to elicit curiosity and conversation, such as pictures, items from other cultures, nature items. How recently were these changed?		
Materials for measuring and weighing		
Books that stimulate curiosity		

Type of Materials	How Many?	List Materials That You Have
Wall chart that shows the sequence of the daily events in words and pictures		
Materials that are appropriate for simple concept formation, if working with toddlers, or more complex concept formation, if working with school aged		
Things displayed in the discovery area that allow children to actually do something with them		
Other materials you have that promote curiosity and conversation		

SESSION III: Materials that Promote Reasoning

Materials needed in this session

Chart paper and markers

Collection of old catalogs, calendars, found objects, such as buttons, corks, spools, plus natural materials, such as seashells, pinecones

Old file folders, pictures that could be used for sequencing, variety of fabric samples

Collection of children's books to stimulate concept formation — see list on p. 19 of this module

Handouts: *Materials for concept formation*

Parent Handout #1—Wish List

Concepts to be emphasized in this session:

- Children's use of materials is important in concept formation
- Many concept materials can be teacher made or collected, with parents' assistance
- Books also help concept formation

Opening Activity

Ask participants to form small groups and share the findings of their materials inventory. Have them identify the areas on which they need to concentrate. Have the group make suggestions to one another about possible sources for these areas.

Using Found Materials

Distribute one of the items, such as catalogs, calendars, collection of buttons, etc. to each of several small groups, or pairs, depending on the number of available items. Ask each group to brainstorm all the ways they could use that item to create materials or activities to promote concept formation and thinking. Have the groups record their ideas on a piece of chart paper.

Discuss all their ideas and add others. Identify all the concepts that are embedded in these ideas. Then **ask** group to brainstorm (and record on chart paper) all the found materials that could be useful for sensory and math exploration, and classifying and sequencing activities. Compare with list on pp. 29 and 30, and add new ideas to handout.

Collections of Natural Objects

Show the collections of natural objects you have brought—seashells, pinecones, rocks, etc.

Record on chart paper a list of ideas of all the natural objects that could be accumulated to help children understand concepts such as number, size, order, similarities and differences. Refer to list on pp 20-21.

Getting Parent Support

Distribute Handout *Parent handout #1—wish list* and discuss getting parents involved in process of accumulating materials for classroom use, or helping make collections. Not only will this help teachers, but it may also give parents ideas of how to use everyday and free objects for children.

Books for Concept Formation

Read aloud to the group one of the children's books listed on p. 22. **Discuss** how a teacher might use this book and follow-up questions and comments to help develop reasoning skills.

Teacher-Made Materials

Refer participants to the ideas about things to make on pages 30-31. Have them suggest additional materials to promote concept formation they have made for their classrooms, and have participants record interesting ideas on their handout. If there is time, have participants begin using some of your found materials, etc. for creating a teacher made activity or game. Give tips for construction, such as precise cutting and laminating for durability. Have them complete this between the sessions, use with the children in their classrooms, and bring it back to show to group at next session.

Collections of Natural Materials

Work on making collections of natural materials that you can store in attractive open baskets. Children can use these collections in numerous ways: for classifying and comparing, for labeling, for counting, and to use in whatever creative ways they devise.

Because of the size and types of materials involved, it is assumed that teachers will present these to preschoolers with appropriate guidelines. Very small materials should be avoided with younger children, for reasons of safety; toddlers would be too likely to explore these items in their mouths.

You may rotate these collections on the open shelves in your manipulative area, as well as in your discovery area. Many teachers find they stimulate curiosity by having a display shelf near the door, to promote beginning conversations with children and families. One day, for example, a large conch shell is displayed there. The next week there are five stones, arranged in order of size.

Things to Collect

- stones and rocks
- cones from evergreen trees—all varieties, seedpods. A light mist of hairspray helps preserve these.
- seashells
- assortments of fresh leaves from different trees. Laminate or use clear Contac paper for longer use. Try to get at least two leaves of same species for finding similarities and differences.
- bones: chicken, turkey, beef, etc. Boil them before using.
- feathers—as many different ones as you can find.
- whatever is in your particular environment.

Just imagine all the concepts and conversation possibilities embedded within these collections! School aged children will be able to make much finer categories in their classifications.

Collections of Found Materials

Enlist the help of your families to find the following kinds of materials that can be displayed in attractive open containers, and used for sensory and math exploration, classification, conversation, creativity, construction, and problem solving.

Things to Collect

- corks of various sizes
- nuts and bolts of various large sizes
- odds and ends of PVC piping, old doorknobs, hinges, switches
- buttons
- small boxes and containers
- wooden and plastic spools
- tape of all kinds, colors, and widths

Accumulate old calendars

- You can often get them drastically reduced when out of date.
- Ask parents to save them for you.
- Cut out the pictures and laminate them.
- You may have pictures that can be sorted for classification and categorization, such as animals, dogs, boats, etc.
- You may also find pictures that evoke conversation about the scenery or people.
- The numbers have countless numbers of uses, in matching, in cutting out to add to the writing table, etc.

Books to Stimulate Curiosity and Concept Formation

You may have considered your book area as an area to promote interest in books and reading. Think about displaying interesting books all over the room, on top of shelves, on tables, anywhere they can attract children's attention.

Carefully choose the books you borrow from the library or purchase, to be sure you include some concept books—those that introduce children to concepts and problem solving, along with being an appealing story. Look, for example, at the math and concepts in "The Three Bears"—size words, temperature words. And what a good example that familiar story is of one to ask "what if" questions. Look at the book list in the July 2001 issue of *Young Children*, in the article "Reading in the Math Class."

Here are some to look for:

Allen, P. *Who Sank the Boat?*
Aubinai, M. *The Farm.*
Baker, J. *Window.*
Brooks, A. *Frogs Jump: A Counting Book*
Hoban, T. *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes.*
Hoban, T. *More, Fewer, Less*
Hoose, P. and H. Hoose. *Hey, Little Ant*
Hutchins, P. *The Doorbell Rang*
Jenkins, S. *Biggest, Strongest, Fastest*
Machotka, H. *What Neat Feet!*
Machotka, H. *Breathtaking Noses*
Rylant, C. *The Relatives Came*
Schwartz, D. *If You Hopped Like a Frog*

If you have a check-out system for families to borrow books, you might point out to them that these books help develop concepts while still being examples of good children's literature, rather than being workbooks in disguise.

Wish List

We need your help in gathering together materials for some collections we are making in the classroom to help children learn a number of important concepts, such as learning what things are similar and what are different, math concepts, and new vocabulary. We can use any of the following items.

- buttons and wooden or plastic spools
- scraps of fabric of all kinds, wrapping and wallpapers, sand paper
- old nuts and bolts, PVC pipe, doorknobs, hinges, switches
- seed or plant catalogs
- calendars
- file folders
- old children's books—can be in poor condition
- small boxes
- corks
- baskets to use for storage
- anything else you are about to discard—We'll see if we can find a use for it!

Also, we will be making collections of natural objects, so when you and your children are outdoors, please look for items such as the following. We will be very careful with these items, and invite you to come into our classroom to see how we are using them to learn.

- stones
- feathers
- seashells
- pine cones and other seeds and pods.

SESSION IV: Conversations toward Thinking

Materials needed for this session

Chart paper and markers

ECERS or copied pages with Item 18, Informal use of language

Handouts: *Class list log*

Sample class list log

Thinking about conversation

Practice on expanding

Concepts to be emphasized during this session

- informal conversations can be used to expand children's thinking
- opportunities for conversation may be found throughout the day, and can be encouraged in parents
- ECERS-R has guidelines for improving informal use of language

Carryover from last session

Facilitate a show and share session for participants to display and describe their experiences using the materials in their classrooms.

ECERS-R on Informal use of language

Distribute and discuss pages for Item 18, Informal Use of Language. Since logical concept development is supported by the ways teachers use language and encourage children to communicate, it is important to consider the quantity and quality of the conversations that occur between adults and children. Language and thinking are inseparably intertwined. As children speak and listen to the communication of others, they get new ideas and information; they formulate and refine their own thinking. Not only are language and communication vital parts of learning social interaction, but also of developing cognitive skills.

Points to make:

1.1 Language environment is poor when the language used by adults is primarily for the purpose of controlling behavior or managing routines. When much of the talk in the classroom comes from teachers who are focused on moving children through the events of the day, and controlling them as they do so. For example, “Come over to the carpet for story time please.” “Hands to yourself, James.” “Are your listening ears on?” “Samantha, I need you to look at the book.” “When we’re finished story time, I need you to use the bathroom before we go outside.” “James, please finish up there, your friends are waiting for you.” And so on through the day.

1.2 and 1.3 When teachers do not value opportunities for conversation with children, they do not respond when children speak or attempt to discourage their talk through much of the day.

3.1 and 3.2 In these minimal indicators, speech is at least allowed, though not truly understood or encouraged. There is an enormous difference between the amount of thinking or language developed when teachers ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no” or other short answer, or when teachers ask questions that stimulate real thinking and responses. For example, when the teacher asks, “Do you like apple juice?” the response is likely one word. This is minimal—3.1. but when the teacher asks “What is your favorite thing to drink? Far more complex cognitive skills such as memory, classification, labeling, and describing are called into play—this is excellent, as pointed out in 7.2.

5.1 The indicators for good teacher performance in this item suggest that teachers understand and value teacher-child conversations, and make opportunities for them throughout the day.

5.2 These conversations involve mutual listening and talking, with turn-taking behaviors, and involve both the social interaction of relationships, and the exchange of information and ideas.

5.3 Another evidence that teachers understand the importance of language in nurturing children’s understanding is that they respond to children’s ideas by expanding on them. Look at the example given beneath the column: If a child says: “Look at this truck,” a teacher who expands on the child’s ideas adds new information by saying, “It’s a red dump truck. See it has a place to carry things.”

5.4 Teachers indicate their understanding of the importance of conversation by encouraging children to communicate with one another, teaching them skills to use, to the extent of their abilities.

7.1 Indicators for excellence describe that teachers regularly have individual conversations with most of the children. This means making a concentrated effort to plan opportunities for conversation during routines and work periods.

7.2 As discussed earlier and in session II, teachers work on developing the skills of asking open-ended questions that promote developing complexity in children's thinking and language process.

Discuss any questions, and **ask** participants to rate themselves on their current level for this item, identifying areas they need to work on.

Individual conversations

Distribute and discuss Handouts *Class List Log* and *Sample Class List Log*. Talk about the need to consciously make opportunities for conversation with individual children, and to check that no child is being left out. When teachers use a tool like the class list log, they are able to keep track of which children are being missed—sometimes children who initiate less conversation than others, so that teachers have to be extra conscious of initiating with that quiet child. Others may be so busy talking with other children that they forego conversation with teachers, and so need special awareness. Others may be children with whom teachers enjoy conversation less than others, so that teachers have to get past their personal feelings. As teachers spend more time talking with these children, they will likely discover more things they can enjoy about these children.

If teachers find that there are times during the day where they had no conversations, they may have to plan to open up these times for conversation by, for example, preparing materials during naptime, involving children more in classroom responsibilities during routine times, or socializing less with other adults during adult play times. Suggest that teachers use such tools to monitor their conversations with children for one full day after this training session, and again in a month, as they concentrate on increasing the use of language in their classrooms.

Encouraging Parent-child Conversations

Discuss the importance of encouraging parents to have real conversations with their children. Such times at home will enhance the parent-child relationship, promote language skills, help children develop logical thinking skills, and help parents become aware of how their children think. **Distribute and review** handout *Thinking about Conversation*. Have participants brainstorm ways they might use such information with parents. For example, **assign** small groups to prepare a quick role play they could use at a parent meeting to demonstrate effectiveness of any one point on the handout. Have role plays demonstrated to large group.

Practice on Expanding Statements

Ask participants to work in pairs to find appropriate expansions to the children's statements on the handout *Practice on Expanding Statements*. Then have round robin to share ideas with group.

Conclusion

Ask participants to share one idea from these sessions that they plan to concentrate on in their classrooms.

Thinking About Conversation

When was the last time you had a good conversation with your child? Not just talking to them, telling them what to do or asking them what kind of sandwich they'd like for lunch, but a real conversation, where you each took turns talking and listening to each other. Knowing how busy today's families are, it may have been a while.

This is something we are working hard on in our classroom, because we know how important to children's development of language and reasoning it is to engage children in real conversation. Here are some tips we encountered in exploring how best to support children's mental growth.

- **Make some time to have conversation with your child undistracted by others.** This time might be when she is taking a bath, or when you are driving him to school, or while you are clearing the breakfast table. Take the opportunity to turn off the TV or radio, and talk.
- **Talk about what is happening around you.** Often we do not realize that children need to have even ordinary things pointed out and explained. "It's cold today isn't it? Pretty soon winter will be coming." "You really like those jeans, don't you? When things have been washed so many times they get to feeling really soft."
- **Ask good questions.** Good questions can't just be answered with a yes, no, or short answer. They take some thinking to form an idea and express it. Not only is this good mental practice for your child, but it also gives you some pretty interesting insights into what your child is thinking. Good questions don't have just one right answer, but can be responded to in lots of different ways. A not so good question: "Did you have a good time at school today?" A better question to really get a conversation going, that also really stimulates your child's memory and language: "What was the thing that you liked best at school today?" Good questions often start with "wh": what, where, why, who, when, etc.
- **Really listen to your child.** What does he mean when he says that? Ask another question, to help him clarify, to really get the meaning, and to help him know that you are really listening. When he says he liked art, ask: "What were you using to make your picture today?"
- **Add new ideas or words into the conversation with your child.** Take her idea and expand it with new information. When she says she liked playing on the slide, respond: "Yes, you can go down fast on the slide, can't you?"
- **Enjoy the conversation, and let your child know that you enjoy the time with her.** Children learn naturally as they hear others use speech and talk about ideas. Don't feel you need to be teaching directly each time you talk—in fact, you are, and it is through this natural conversation that both you and your child benefit.

Practice in Expanding

For each of the following statements, practice ways you could expand the utterance, adding new ideas or language.

1. "There's a bird."
2. "I'm three."
3. "This is my new shirt."
4. "My mommy went to work."
5. "My daddy went on an airplane."
6. "I have a dog."
7. "My grandma's coming to see me."
8. "I want to play with Legos."
9. "I went to the doctor."
10. "I don't like beans."

POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Developed for Arkansas State University Childhood Services
By Nancy P. Alexander

This training is designed with 5 sessions, each lasting 30-45 minutes, with suggested activities for participants to engage in between sessions to reinforce their learning. The trainer will find suggested activities and content in each session, with related handouts. Directions for the trainer are printed in **bold**.

Outline of Sessions

- I. Exploring Experiences in Guidance and Discipline
- II. Setting the Stage for Self-Control
- III. Why Not Punishment?
- IV. Discipline Techniques that Teach
- V. Conflict Resolution

SESSION I: Exploring Experiences in Guidance and Discipline

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers or white board and markers

4 posters: Lion Tamer; Pussycat; Wise Owl; Blind Bat, and masking tape

Paper for participants, and pencils

Handouts: *What is Guidance?*

Growing With Discipline

Check Your Discipline Attitudes

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Adult attitudes to discipline have been influenced by childhood experiences
- Important for teachers to become conscious of the emotional and personal factors that affect their interaction with children
- Discipline is much more than punishment

Beginning Activity

Ask participants to find a partner and each share a memory from their childhood—as far back as they can go—of a time when they received some discipline from an adult—be very careful to use the word “discipline.” Give enough time for each to talk and then **ask** for a few of these stories to be shared. Likely you will hear stories that are memories of true discipline, such as consequences, etc., but even more likely you will hear some memories of punishment—try to hear enough stories so you get at least one true discipline, but if you don’t, that will make your point even more strongly. Take your time hearing the stories, asking the teller how they felt about the situation, about themselves, and the person who was giving them the “discipline.” Then ask participants if they see any difference between the stories.

Point out that most people use discipline and punishment as if they meant the same thing but they don't. For example, those who say "I'm going to give you some discipline right on the seat of your pants" are clearly confusing the two ideas.

Discipline comes from the same root word as disciple and means "to teach" rather than to punish. Punishment is probably the least effective of all the techniques we can use to teach, as we will discuss in a later session. For now, let's remember some of the emotions that were associated with the punishments recalled by participants.

One of the reasons discipline is such an emotional topic for people to discuss is that strong feelings were involved with early learning about right and wrong behaviors. For those of us who have hurtful memories from childhood, it is often hard to get past those memories. Often in moments of stress, we hear ourselves saying the same words, played from an old tape in our heads. It takes conscious effort to come to terms with what we would have wished for our own childhoods, and to learn more positive approaches for responding to children today. That is why we begin our sessions on discipline by considering some of our experiences and attitudes, so we can actively participate in reframing our approach to guidance.

Let's do a couple more things to consider what we bring with us personally as we approach this topic.

Activity: 4 corners

Point out to participants the four corners, each labeled with an animal to signify the approach of the dominant adult model of discipline in their childhood—likely a parent, perhaps a grandparent. Ask them to go to the corner suggestive of that approach. When they get there, they should discuss with others in the same corner why they chose that corner.

Process the various approaches to parenting, what they look like and what results they produce. Different styles of adult guidance interaction are about power—who has the power in each style of interaction? Each corner represents one of the styles of interaction.

The lion tamer represents the authoritarian adult who retains all the power and control. Authoritarian adults are often lacking in nurturing behaviors, and set absolute standards of behavior for children that are not to be questioned or negotiated, but are often forcefully demanded. Children raised with this style of parenting have little opportunity to practice decision-making or self-control, and their self-esteem is low, as the implied message is that they are not capable.

The pussycat is the overly permissive (permissive indulgent) adult who just wants the young person to be happy and so gives in to the young person's demands for power. When permissive adults place few demands on children or youth, or abdicate responsibility altogether, they give power to young people before they have the knowledge and self control

to handle it well. The result again is little self-control or responsibility for their actions, and a sense that adults do not care enough to have higher expectations for behavior.

The blind bat represents another face of permissiveness—permissive indifferent—where no adult is available to help young people use power wisely so they have too much power without adult assistance.

The wise owl represents the authoritative adult, one who recognizes that children need limits and help to regulate their behavior, and guides young people into sharing power in their own lives as they become able to learn skills to manage it. Usually results in self-control and positive feelings about self.

Ask participants to consider who they are as they interact with children. Have them make a line on a blank piece of paper with authoritarian at one end of the line and permissive at the other, marking authoritative somewhere in the middle. Ask them to place themselves on this line with an X, and put the paper away to reflect on later.

Handout: Check your Discipline Attitudes

Ask participants to take a few minutes to mark the statements on the handout as true or false, and then discuss their answers with a partner. When the pairs find differences, ask them to talk about how their early experiences may have influenced them to answer as they did.

Discuss their insights.

Goals of any guidance system are:

1. to help children move toward self-control, and
2. to help children develop positive self-esteem. Everything we do should work toward those goals.

Refer to Handout *Growing with Discipline*, especially the ideas in the first 3 paragraphs. In early childhood, we recognize children are growing in their ability to understand and cooperate in many of the social norms and expectations of behavior. Additionally, our diverse classrooms may contain children whose home behavior may be different from what we expect in the classrooms. (Examples: in some homes, shouting may be a common way of relating to each other, whereas we want children to talk in a lower voice in school. Physical roughhousing may be completely acceptable and encouraged in some homes, yet likely prohibited in our classrooms. Helping children live in our society and get along with others is a challenge, and we must understand that children have many new behaviors to learn in a group setting

Look at Why do children misbehave? On handout *Growing with Discipline*.

Teacher's first response with misbehavior should be to ask question "What can I be teaching and how teach it so it is meaningful to this child?"

Wrap-up Activity

Handout *What is Guidance*.

We started this session by pointing out that discipline is not the same as punishment. Our negative associations with the word discipline may require us to begin using the word guidance in its place. Now it is time to define guidance, reframing our approach to guiding children. **Look at** the definitions on the handout, and **consider** the words.

Definition #1:

-slow—process of developing self-control going on through childhood into adolescence. Talk about self control, vs. being controlled by adults.

-bit-by-bit and time-consuming—nothing instant about this; not tell them twice and expect them to be controlled—learning from repeated experiences and examples.

-helping them see the sense—means information, communication, and experience needed. Have to understand why to behave so one can control self (eventually) in the absence of adult monitors. Punishment usually doesn't help with this piece—only controlling self when adult who punishes may catch them.

Definition #2

Adults have to think about changing their own behaviors, instead of concentrating exclusively on the behaviors of children. This may include managing the environment and group, but also includes seeing their role differently, as guide to appropriate behaviors, rather than enforcing punisher of negative behaviors.

Take definitions with them and post in their classrooms, and think about them.

Before next session:

Ask participants to record the specifics of a situation in their classroom that is a recurring problem.

What is Guidance?

GUIDANCE is the slow, bit-by-bit, time consuming task of helping children see the sense in acting in a certain way.

-adapted from James Hymes

GUIDANCE is the art of changing your actions so that you increase the probability of getting the desired behavior from children.

-adapted from Elizabeth Crary

Growing With Discipline

What is discipline?

Discipline is guidance and training which strengthens a person in his growth toward maturity. Our goal for the child is to help him grow in self-directions so that he may take wise decisions and guide himself. Discipline need not mean dictatorship or punishment. Indeed, dictatorship and punishment often has the opposite effect of making a problem worse. The goal is self-discipline, not conforming just when there is a feared authority present.

Need for discipline

There can be no real freedom without discipline; it is important for every age and every group. Children want to do what is right, and in today's world they cannot be left to find the best way unguided by parents and adults. It is not fair to them to grow up without the ability to be accepted into society.

Discipline is necessary for:

- wholesome and satisfying relationships with others
- health and safety
- protection of the rights of others
- effective living in a society

Why do children misbehave?

- The environment, expectations, or activities may be inappropriate.
- They do not know what is right or what would happen.
- They are curious -- they must know "why."
- They want to be independent.
- They mean to be helpful.
- They may be bored.
- They love the limelight.
- They may be angry, frustrated, or upset.
- They do not know how to get what they want.
- They have not learned social conventions.

Children are different in many ways and alike in many others. There is a difference in ability and a whole range of energy, sizes, and personalities in a given age group. Most children are active, exploring, spontaneous, and have a definite need to assert themselves as persons. These characteristics make children interesting, challenging, and lovable. Yet these same traits may get them into trouble

Check Your Discipline Attitudes

Evaluating your own perspectives and attitudes about discipline is one step in developing effective guidance skills.

Directions: Mark each statement either true or false depending on your perspective. Then discuss your answers with your director or an early childhood professional.

- _____ 1. A child who demonstrates serious misbehavior during the preschool years is probably unsalvageable.
- _____ 2. Some children do not respond to any reprimands other than spanking.
- _____ 3. Shaming a child in front of peers is a good way to encourage cooperation with adults.
- _____ 4. Young children who lie will probably develop into chronic liars in adulthood.
- _____ 5. When a young child appears guilty it means he has probably done something wrong.
- _____ 6. Children's misbehavior is a clear-cut sign of poor parenting.
- _____ 7. It is acceptable for boys to be more rough and aggressive in their play than girls are.
- _____ 8. Girls should exhibit more "ladylike" and gentle behaviors in their play than boys do.
- _____ 9. The same children usually start problems.
- _____ 10. The old "tried-and-true" methods of discipline used by our grandparents are the most effective.
- _____ 11. Children will learn to mind if you just tell them often enough that they must.

SESSION II: Setting the Stage for Self-Control

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers or whiteboard and markers
Handout *Preventing Discipline Problems*

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Many discipline problems traced to inappropriate environment
- Best approach to discipline is prevention
- Positive behaviors and habits are supported by environment

Introductory Activity

Ask participants to find a partner with whom to share their report of a recurring problem in their classroom (assigned at end of last session.) When each has spoken, ask the pairs to define the possible causes of the problem, and to record their causes on a large piece of chart paper posted at the front of the room.

Discussion of Causes of Problem Behaviors

Discuss the list of causes. Chances are, many will be related to things that could be prevented by attention to indirect guidance—behind the scenes teacher planning of space, schedule, materials and activities, and grouping of individuals within the environment. While misbehavior may also be related to individuals' temperaments, learning experiences, and needs, many things that create problems in the classroom result from:

- boredom—lack of challenging materials, or new and interesting things to do, or empty waiting periods
- frustration—materials and activities do not match ability, or materials and space too limited to be able to carry out plans
- sense of chaos and disorder—noise and clutter in a classroom contribute to out of bounds behavior
- insecurity—no predictability in schedule of daily events
- inactivity—schedule does not allow for enough active play
- lack of supervision or available adult attention--

By paying attention to managing the space, time, materials, and supervision, teachers may find themselves having to spend less time having to put out fires (killing flies vs. fixing the screen door.)

Discussion of Factors in the Environment That Influence Behavior

Space

- enough space to avoid conflicts from overcrowding, clearly defined play areas
- cues to limit number of children playing in each area, and for where to sit at meals and circle times, to avoid conflict (as well as prevent unsuitable combinations of children)
- arrangements to promote independence—accessible shelves for storage of materials, accessible personal space (cubbies), stools, etc. for bathroom use. When children can easily access the materials they want, they become responsible for their decisions.
- placement of interest centers to limit noise in environment, with barriers to avoid children's distraction, yet still permit adults to see whole room
- attention to traffic patterns to protect construction and quiet play
- private space for children to withdraw to when needed
- consistency in room arrangement and cues for storage of materials so children become familiar with where to find things, where to play with materials
- restful colors and wall décor, to promote relaxed interaction
- awareness of hazards, such as broken toys, spilled water, sand or rice, to protect children and create awareness of safety in the environment
- **go back to** list of reasons for misbehavior generated earlier—do you see any connections?

Schedule

- a predictable sequence of events helps children develop feelings of security and habits of how to behave
- much of the schedule for the day needs to be large time blocks where children can choose their activities. When children choose what they want to do, they will become more engaged in their activities, preventing boredom and problems. Many choices also allows children the opportunity to work in small groups, where they function best
- a good schedule alternates periods of active play with periods of quieter, more focused activity. This permits children to have enough rest during the day so that they do not become so fatigued that it is difficult to keep themselves under control. In addition, the principle of active followed by quieter is used when planning group activities.
- the schedule must be planned to allow for a lot of activity. Daily outdoor play is essential to give children the freedom to use large muscles for exercise, movement, and stress release. Trying to keep children still and quiet for extended periods is asking for discipline problems. Plan for gross motor activity even on rainy days when you cannot go outdoors. Substituting watching a video for outdoor play is not a good idea.
- when the schedule recognizes that young children have short attention spans, it allows for many choices of activities during learning center times, and plans for short activities at group times.
- transitions are managed to avoid empty waiting times. When waiting is necessary, teachers fill in the time with finger plays, songs, or movement activities.
- **ASK:** were any of our listed causes of misbehavior related to our use of time in schedules and transitions?

Materials

Questions to ask if teachers are having many discipline problems:

- a. Are there enough interesting things for the children to do? Unoccupied children are more likely to become interested in creating their own “fun” which may be unacceptable in a group setting.
- b. Are there enough materials so that children do not have to wait for turns? Expecting children to wait for long periods is asking for trouble. Teacher-made materials, free and inexpensive materials, garage sale finds, and parent donations can expand options for children. Open-ended “loose parts” allow for a variety of combinations in play.
- c. Are the materials and supplies well arranged for the children to help themselves? The more children can follow their own interests, the smoother your day will go.
- d. Are the materials rotated so there are new things put out on a regular basis? Bringing out new items and fresh materials frequently will motivate children to become engaged with the materials and prevent misbehavior.
- e. Are the materials sufficiently challenging to hold the children’s attention, but not so difficult they are frustrating to children? Bored or frustrated children are more likely to misbehave.
- f. Are materials and toys complete and well cared for? Putting out puzzles with missing pieces or broken trucks sends a message of chaos and “anything goes” to children that goes against orderly patterns of behavior.
- g. Have children been shown safe and appropriate ways to use equipment and materials? Teaching children what and how you want them to use equipment will reduce problems resulting from misuse of equipment.

Discuss how many of the causes of the problem behaviors were related to these points about materials.

Planning

Having a well-planned program that has a balanced schedule that meets the needs of children with enough equipment and materials, well-arranged and rotated with new things to do on a regular basis will reduce the incidence of behavior problems. When teachers spend time planning and preparing, they will spend less time handling discipline issues.

- planning age-appropriate experiences will involve children in positive activity
- planning activities that do not require teacher instruction or assistance frees teachers for supervision of the whole group and interaction with children who would benefit. Pleasant conversation and interaction with an adult keeps many youngsters on track for behavior.
- teachers can play activities to help children learn how to interact with each other cooperatively. Books and songs may offer opportunities at group time to have discussion about how to handle social situations. Teachers should plan activities for a few children to work side-by-side or in small groups. Watch for examples during the day of people helping and getting along, and discuss the experiences with the children.
- make a plan for how to introduce children to the rules, and plan with any other adults involved on how to be consistent in settling limits and expectations. When rules don’t

make sense or are undefined, children may not understand the expectations for behavior in your program. Remember that consistency should also apply to how adults apply expectations outdoors as well as in.

- plan with other adults for covering the supervision of the classroom. Sometimes this means deciding who will be available for conversations with parents, and who will be paying complete attention to the children's activity. Children may never be left unsupervised, even for a short period of time. Being prepared for the day's activities means gathering items you need before taking responsibility for the children. Take care of personal needs during breaks, and communicate with other staff during scheduled meetings or by written communication. Supervision means adults can often head off problems before they develop.

Summary of Prevention

Distribute Handout *Preventing Discipline Problems*

- point out first section, How do you interact with the children? Teachers are also an important part of the environment, and forming relationships and interaction is a key to the positive communication that is involved in guidance. More about this in a later session.
- again, emphasis on materials and physical environment

Wrap-up

Ask participants to identify one area of their environment that they will pay close attention to in the time before the next session, to try to eliminate some behavior problems. List these down on chart paper, to refer back to at beginning of next session.

Preventing Discipline Problems

Discipline problems frequently occur when children do not have enough to do or they are not involved in interesting activities. Usually an interested adult can guide children's behavior in a positive manner. Ask yourself these questions to be sure you are not contributing to discipline problems

HOW DO YOU INTERACT WITH THE CHILDREN?

1. Directive - telling children how to use the items
2. Facilitative - asking questions to help children solve problems themselves; suggesting ideas by participating; modeling activities; verbalizing
3. Passive - remaining uninvolved with the children

Which of the approaches above do you think is the most beneficial to children?

ARE THE CHILDREN FAMILIAR WITH THE MATERIALS?

Have you introduced the materials to the children appropriately? Do they understand the expectations of how and where to use them? Do you understand and allow for the children's typical use of new and familiar material?

1. New Materials - the children may engage in more exploration
2. Familiar Materials - the children may engage in more constructive/dramatic play

WHERE ARE THE MATERIALS?

1. Are material restricted to a specific area, or can children move about the room with them?
2. Are materials available by self selection, or must children ask for them?
3. Is storage convenient to where you want them to be used?
4. Is clean up easy to manage by the children?

SESSION III: Why Not Punishment?

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers, or whiteboard and markers
Chart listing participants' goals for changes in the environment, compiled at end of last session
Papers and markers for individual use
Stop sign
Copies of ECERS
Copies of Arkansas licensing standards, pages that relate to discipline
Handouts: *Change These Negative Statements to Positive Pnes*
Time Out for Time Out

Concepts to be emphasized during this session

- Punishment has negative side effects
- ECERS and Arkansas licensing standards prohibit punishment
- A positive approach is more effective in guidance than a negative approach
- problems with timeout

Carryover activity

As participants gather, **post** the chart of individual goals to work on in environment, generated at the end of last session. **Distribute** sheets of paper and markers for participants to illustrate their progress in what they were working on, and give each participant an opportunity to describe their drawing of their experiences.

Consideration of Punishment and its Side Effects

Think back to one of the worst punishment stories that a participant told in the first session, during the memory exercise—check with the participant if it's OK to use that as an example of some of the side effects of punishment. Focus on the child's emotional response to the punishment, and their response to the punishing adult.

Point out

- punishment rarely teaches what it is intended to teach. Basically, it teaches stop doing this right now, and don't do it again when an adult is around who can catch you. It does not teach the child what he should do next time. **Show** stop sign. Punishment only controls through fear, not because children understand the reasons for desirable behavior.
- punishment usually gives rise to feelings of resentment, anger, fear, and humiliation. If these feelings are strong enough, they don't permit the individual to focus on personal responsibility for the misbehavior, but instead direct thoughts towards the person who has caused these feelings.
- punishment and the associated negative emotions diminish the child's self-esteem. It is hard to behave appropriately when you don't feel yourself to be a capable or lovable person. Punishment often doesn't make it clear that it is the misbehavior that is not liked, not the child.
- punishment gives an example of dealing with others in a harsh manner, and does not model acceptable ways of treating others.
- when children are punished as the major method of discipline, they tend not to develop self-control, but rather continue to push the limits until they are stopped. They are not able to control their own behavior in the absence of adult monitors.
- when there are enough negative feelings directed toward the punishing adult, the child wants to have little to do with that adult. This breaks the relationship. In fact, the strongest motivation for children to change their behavior comes from feelings of identification—wanting to be like the loved adult, and wanting to please the loved adult. Punishment interferes with identification.
- when children are blamed, shamed and made to feel excessive guilt, they come to believe themselves to be unworthy people, but they are not helped to change their behavior.
- thus the side-effects of punishment work against it as an effective teaching tool.
- Important concept to stress: can't punish people into becoming responsible, caring, respectful members of their community, but can teach, guide, and nurture them there, with appropriate modeling and attention to appropriate behaviors.

Consideration of Standards: Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers and ECERS-R Items 31 and 32

Discuss the list of actions not allowed from the Arkansas Department of Human Services Child Care Licensing Unit. Discuss the importance of the law on corporal punishment and how punishment does more harm than good.

- a. Restraints
- b. Washing mouth with soap
- c. Taping or obstructing a child's mouth
- d. Placing unpleasant or painful tasting substances in mouth, on lips etc.
- e. Profane or abusive language
- f. Isolation without supervision
- g. Placing child in dark areas
- h. Inflicting physical pain such as hitting, pinching, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, twisting arms, biting or biting back, spitting, swatting, etc.

- i. Forcing physical activity such as running laps, doing push-ups, etc.
- j. Associating discipline with food, rest, toilet training, or illness
- k. Shaming, humiliating, frightening, physically or mentally harming children or labeling children.

Discuss reasons for these prohibitions, any questions, and the rationale for the items in no. 10 particularly. Then together **examine** Item 31 Discipline in the ECERS-R. Note that punitive measures are indicators for inadequate quality, and then notice the descriptions of the non-punitive and positive methods under the good and excellent columns. Discuss. Then consider relevance of Item 32, Staff-child interaction, stressing importance of positive relationships with adults for success of a guidance system.

A Positive Approach

Having seen the difficulties in taking the negative approach in discipline, it is now important to consider the reasons why the positive approach is more effective in the long run.

- teaches children what they can do and promotes development of self control
- portrays adults as positive, loving individuals who will support children's growth and learning new behaviors
- helps children see that adults believe they can learn, thus building up children's confidence
- models positive ways to deal with others
- preserves relationship with adult
- more productive as long-term approach—punishment only stops temporarily

With all those good reasons, it is important for adults to reframe their guidance responses from negative stopping to positive teaching.

Practice Exercise: From Negative to Positive

Distribute Handout *Change These Negative Statements to Positive Ones*

Remind participants that goal is to move from telling children what not to do, and instead suggest what a better behavior would be. Ask them to work in pairs to change the negative statement to positive ones. Then share responses in a round robin in large group, and discuss any questions.

Make point that this often requires re-training our tongues from first, negative responses to more positive, teaching statements.

Time Out as Punishment or Cool Down?

The way time out is used often means that it is ineffective. When adults use time out as a punishment, children usually do not spend the time calming down so that they can rejoin the activity or group with more appropriate behaviors. **Distribute** the handout and **ask** participants to read it by themselves. Then **facilitate** a discussion of the appropriate uses of timeout as a tool to teach control, not simply show adult displeasure and power. Points to emphasize:

- last resort, not first
- not for use with infants and toddlers—redirection and removal from problem area more appropriate here
- not meant to humiliate—no special chair or area
- not to be left alone—need adult support to work out feelings, calm down and re-focus.
- a short time—then talk about more appropriate behavior
- not to be intended or framed as a punishment

Wrap-up

Could do quick round robin of an idea they are struck with after today's session. Then ask participants to try to find one example of changing a negative statement to a positive in the time before they come back for the next session.

Change these Negative Statements to Positive Ones

In working with children, it is better to phrase comments in a positive manner. Below are some negative comments. Below each comment, write a positive way to give the same directions. An example is given for the first one. Discuss your finished work with your director or another child care professional.

1. Don't stand on the slide!
Please sit down on the slide.
2. Stop throwing the sand!
3. Don't run in the room.
4. Don't drink her milk.
5. Stop yelling in the room! You're bad!
6. Don't run into her on the tricycle.
7. Stop poking your friend.
9. Don't walk in front of the swing.
8. Stop throwing rocks.
10. That's bad to tear the book.
11. Stop hitting Johnny.
12. Don't kick your friend.
13. Stop talking at group time.
14. Don't bite Emily!

Time Out for Time Out

Discipline for young children is to teach social skills and discourage inappropriate behavior. "Time-out" is not a first choice, but a last resort technique for a child who is harming another or in danger of harming herself. Used often or inappropriately, time-out will be ineffective.

The early years are a time for children to develop confidence and self-control. When adults create environments that respect each child, they send a message that the world is a warm, friendly place. Positive discipline techniques that combine caring and guidance are a part of this healthy environment. Adults should look for ways to show children why harmful and aggressive acts are unacceptable.

Before you give a child time-out, make sure of the following:

1. Avoid using time-out for infants and toddlers. Very young children should not be isolated, nor should they be ignored or left without proper stimulation. Infants or young toddlers should gently be directed to more acceptable behaviors or activities.
2. Your expectations of a child's behavior are realistic. Knowledge of child development will help you identify when children are merely experimenting with their boundaries and when they are behaving inappropriately. When adults give children realistic goals, children feel good about themselves and are more likely to cope successfully with stressful situations.
3. When children experience immediate repercussions for harming others, they understand more clearly why we are disciplining them. Whenever possible, adults should offer positive alternatives to children's actions (asking a child to rebuild a block structure she has knocked down is more productive than removing her from the area).
4. Time-out should not be humiliating, nor should it make children feel threatened or afraid. There should not be a special chair or area assigned for time-out--this reinforces the idea that time-out is a punishment and may cause undue anxiety. Adults should never make a child feel ridiculed or isolated during time-out periods.
5. The child should not be left alone. Young children need adults' support to work out their feelings. If adults show children that their feelings count, they will be more likely to respect the feelings of others. A caregiver should always visually observe a child during a time-out period.
6. Time out should not last longer than it takes for the child to calm down and no more than one minute per year of age. After the child calms down, explain clearly what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. There should be no ambiguity about why we have disciplined the child.

7. The child feels safe and knows that people care for her. Children imitate adult's behavior. Screaming or ridiculing a child for bad behavior is not an effective way to teach self-control.
8. Time-out is not used as a punishment. Time-out is an opportunity for a child to clear her mind and rejoin the group or activity in a more productive state. Teach a child how to solve her own problems with love and support, and time-out may no longer be necessary.

Tailor the method of discipline to the individual child. Children develop their abilities to control themselves at different rates. Take into consideration the needs of the particular child involved. No single technique will work with every child every time

SESSION IV: Guidance and Discipline as Teaching

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers, or white board and markers

Paper and markers for participant

Handouts: *What should you say or do when?*

Rules about rules

108 ways to praise children

Concepts to emphasize during this session

- Children need limits applied consistently and firmly to help them develop self-control and self-esteem
- Positive guidance techniques are all about clear and respectful communication
- Positive guidance techniques teach desirable behaviors and reasons why these are appropriate.

Pats on the Back

Ask participants to write a brief description of changing a negative statement to a positive one on a piece of paper, and tape it to their back/shoulder. Allow a time for participants to walk around reading others' descriptions. Perhaps share 1 or 2 out loud.

Considering Rules and Limits

Ask participants to work in small groups to generate a list of the essential rules/limits for a classroom for young children, and to write them on chart paper. Post all pages for participants to see and think about. As you discuss the lists, there are some essential points to make:

- rules should be simple and few—related to peace, order, respect, and kindness.
- rules should be stated as positive actions to learn to become a responsible member of the community—in this case, the classroom.
- there are basically 4 necessary reasons for limits on behaviors: to keep all members of the community safe and healthy; to safeguard the physical environment of the community; to ensure respectful treatment of all members of the community; and to make all community members responsible for their actions.
- when rules are clear to all and consistently maintained, the classroom provides predictable security and promotes the development of self-control

In the light of these points, are there any rules on the lists that should be changed or eliminated? Also look at Handout *Rules about Rules* to see how the rules on the chart pages fit into this.

Positive Guidance Techniques

Discuss each of the following positive guidance techniques, helping teachers understand that these are effective methods for setting limits and helping children learn more acceptable behaviors.

a. Catch children being good—positive reinforcement

When teachers pay attention to desirable behaviors, those behaviors will be repeated. Watch for the things you want to see happening, such as picking up toys, sharing, caring for the materials, cleaning up messes, and then make a point to comment on how much you like to see the child behaving in that specific way. This is the most effective use of teacher time. See Handout *108 Ways to Praise Children* for lots of good reinforcing words and actions.

b. Ignoring

Some things are best ignored. If everything kids do is wrong, they come to see themselves as incapable of doing well—surely damaging to self-concept. In addition, paying attention to negative behavior actually reinforces it, rather than making it disappear. Ignoring the negative, if no one is being harmed, works well when combined with paying attention to positive behaviors.

c. Redirection

One of the most useful ways of changing behavior is to redirect children. When a child is doing something that is not allowed, the teacher suggests something similar that is acceptable. For example if a child tears a book, he may be given newspaper to tear with a comment, “You may not tear the book, but you may tear all the newspaper you want. That’s why we have it here.” If a child is angry and hits someone, he may be given playdough or clay to pound and told, “You may hit the playdough, but not other people.” Redirection

should pick up on the child's interest and activity level, and suggest acceptable behavior. Redirection is also effective with youngest children, such as toddlers. With infants, physical redirection is appropriate, as well as substitution, giving the child something else to play with, rather than the item that may be too fragile or belong to someone else.

d. Consequences

When children learn firsthand through the results of their mistakes in behavior, they gain lasting lessons that contribute to self-control. There are 2 kinds of consequences: natural and logical:

Natural consequences are those that just naturally occur as a result of the actions of the child. For example, when Mary tries to run faster than anyone else, she slips and falls. Or when Jacob refuses to follow the rules that the other children have set for their play, they tell him he can't play. The experience alone may help the child regulate future behavior differently. If there is any role for an adult here, it may be to verbally draw the connection between the child's actions and the result: "I think that they're telling you that you can't play because you weren't following the ideas they had for their play"--neutrally, not as "I told you so."

Logical consequences require the adult to help devise an activity that should logically follow the first behavior of the child, something that will help make amends or allow them to see the results of their actions firsthand. The adult identifies the logical consequence—although children should be asked if they have ideas on what they should do to make amends—and ensures that the child follows through on the action. This allows the child to have to take responsibility for their actions, experiencing the pain their actions have caused. This is very different from simply having to sit in time out and do nothing but "think", leaving the child free to do it again, without having had genuine experience. For example, when Chuck destroyed a construction that Will and Tyrone worked on, logically he should have to help rebuild it. Or when Karen's unkind words caused Jennifer to burst into tears. The adult can help Karen find a way to help Jennifer feel better.

e. Contingencies

Contingencies are another effective way of putting children in charge of their behavior. "*When you have...then you may...*", as in "When you have put all the blocks back on the shelf, then you may join us for circle time." "When you have finished yelling, then you may ask Paul if you could have a turn."

Choices for self-control are similar to contingencies—they make it clear that the person in charge of the behavior is the child, not the adult. The adult's role is to give the bottom line for the desirable action. The choice of how and when it is done is the child's, allowing them to have some say and control of their own behavior. For example, "The blocks need to be picked up before we go outside. You can do it by yourself, or get a couple of friends to help you." "The other children want to hear the story. You may choose to be quiet so everyone can hear, or leave the circle until you are able to do so. The choice is yours."

f. "I"-messages

"I"-messages are a way of setting limits by expressing the adult's emotion and the event that caused the feeling. When adults have caring relationships with children, the fact that the young person's behavior caused a negative emotion in the adult has the effect of causing changes in behavior. In addition, the reason offered allows increased understanding and knowledge needed for self-control. For example, "I am worried when I see you climbing so high because I'm not sure you can be safe." "I get angry when you hit your friends because hitting hurts people."

All of these positive guidance techniques help set limits effectively and teach appropriate behaviors for developing self-control. Process any questions or comments about these techniques.

g. Modeling

Remember that children learn most of their important lessons about how to live with others by watching the examples of the loved adults in their lives. Remember that teacher's role in modeling positive behaviors and treating children with respect is a most important consideration. "Do as I do not just as I say."

Practice with Positive Guidance Techniques

Distribute Handout *What should you say or do when*

Ask participants to work in small groups on identifying which of the effective positive guidance techniques might be useful in these scenarios. Share the small group thinking in the large group.

Wrap up

Round robin for participants to identify one useful idea they are taking away with them.

Next Session:

- a. Use one of these techniques in the intervening period, and come prepared to describe its effectiveness and/or questions, and
- b. Record a situation among children that involves conflict.

108 WAYS TO PRAISE CHILDREN

You're fantastic	Way to go	You tried hard	You're special
Outstanding	You're catching on	Great	Good
Neat	Well done	Remarkable	Excellent
I'm proud of you	Fantastic	Super star	Nice work
You're on top of it	Beautiful	Now you're flying	Wow
Now you've got it	You're incredible	Bravo	Super
Hooray for you	On target	You're on your way	How nice
How smart	You're important	That's incredible	Hot dog
You make me happy	You're unique	I like you	Good for you
You're spectacular	You're darling	Beautiful work	Super
Magnificent	Marvelous	You're precious	Super job
Phenomenal	You're sensational	Super work	Creative job
Great discovery	Fantastic job	You're a treasure	Dynamite
You are responsible	You are exciting	Terrific	Good job
What a good listener	You are fun	You're growing up	Awesome
You care	Beautiful sharing	Great surprise	Wonderful
I trust you	You're important	You mean a lot to me	Great effort
You've got a friend	You make me laugh	Give me five	I respect you
Fabulous	That's correct	You made my day	Noteworthy
You're wonderful	You're perfect	I'm happy about that	A+ job
You're a-OK	My buddy	Fantastic job	Star job
That's the best	A big hug	You belong	A big kiss
You learned it right	I love you!	Hip, hip hooray	Looking good
Bingo	You figured it out	You're beautiful	Spectacular
You're a winner	Remarkable	You're a good friend	You're a joy
Atta-boy (girl)	Yes!	Right on	Knockout
I knew you could do it	Nothing can stop you now	You brighten my day	What an imagination
You've discovered the secret	Exceptional performance	You mean the world to me	Outstanding performance
Keeping on really pays off	You gave it your best shot	That's a mighty effort	What a Challenge
You're going all the way to the top	I like what you do for others	You make me proud of you	Exemplary Effort

Remember that a smile is worth one thousand words!

Rules about Rules

Rules provide a way to help children understand that there are boundaries and guidelines for what's acceptable behavior. It is easier for children to uphold a standard when they know what the expectation is.

Rules are policies which govern:

1. **Movement** - "You may ride your trike on the sidewalk, not by the swings."
2. **Belongings** - "Your jacket belongs on the hook in your cubby, not on the floor."
3. **Responsibilities** - "The puzzles need to be picked up before we go outside."
4. **Living habits** - "Rest time is after lunch." or "We come to the table with clean hands."

What Should You Say or Do When?

A 2 year old kicks you when you will not let him do something he wants to do.

A 3 year old sticks out her tongue at another child.

A 4 year old uses an obscene word.

A 4 year old is angry at another and yells "I'm gonna kill you!"

A 3 year old grabs a toy away from another child.

A 2 year old takes toys from others.

A 3 year old calls another a racially derogatory name.

A 4 year old spits at another child.

SESSION V: Conflict Resolution

Materials needed

Chart paper and markers or whiteboard and markers

Handouts: *Coach or Referee?*

Practice Conflict Resolution

What would you do Review Worksheet

Discipline and guidance Review Worksheet

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Conflict is not a bad thing to be immediately stopped, because children need to learn how to deal with it constructively; it is a part of a teaching relationship, not a disruption of it.
- Some conflict is inevitable when groups of children come together, although some reasons for conflict can be eliminated by planning and effective group management.
- Conflict resolution involves giving children communication skills to be able to constructively work out problems with others for themselves.

Opening activity

Have participants form small groups to share examples of trying to use positive guidance techniques. Discuss any questions or comments.

Dialogues

Get volunteers to read aloud the dialogues on Handout *Coach or Referee?*

Then **discuss** the difference between a referee, who controls all the action, and a coach, who teaches the skills for working through problems with others.

Point out important ideas about conflict and our handling of it:

- many teachers make their first goal to get conflict stopped and settled, and get back to their own teaching agenda. So they solve the problem, leaving children without learning how to do it.
- another unhelpful approach is to tell the kids to handle it themselves. Without the skills, they can't handle it well. Bullies or stronger children may prevail.
- conflict resolution is about helping children learn how to cool down and communicate with others, hearing others' perspective, and problem solving.
- adult role is to mediate, facilitating talk with one another, considering and selecting solutions, and carrying out plans acceptable to all. The adult is a neutral guide, modeling how to establish communication and demonstrating what questions to ask.
- this is hard for many teachers who may be used to solving all situations in order to show children who's boss, and quickly restore quiet. It is important to emphasize short-term effectiveness of such strategies, without children learning new behaviors and skills. These skills have long-term implications for healthy assertiveness and self-confidence for children who can solve their own problems.
- some teachers object on basis of taking too much time. It is time-consuming when first introducing new ways of solving problems, but timesaving in long run, as teachers avoid so many interruptions when adults need to put out fires.

Steps of Resolving Conflicts

Discuss the steps of helping children work through conflicts, found on handout.

- important to state in words what the problem seems to be: "Looks like you both want to use the new bike."
- adults get down on children's level, helping them to turn to face each other, rather than talk directly to adult. If one child is weaker than other (less developed in communication, etc.) adult may stand beside that child to face the other and encourage their communication, "Mary, what would you like to tell him about what you need?"
- adults stay neutral, encouraging children to express their needs and recognize that each has their own perspective.
- teachers encourage brainstorming solutions—many ideas, without comments, what ideas do you both have about how this could be worked out?
- teachers help children choose a plan they both can live with. Adults may ask questions to clarify "Who will go first? How long is a turn? Would you like me to remind you when five minutes is up?"

Practice at Conflict Resolution.

Distribute handout *Practice Conflict Resolution*, and ask participants to work in small groups to develop role-plays to demonstrate their use of conflict resolutions skills. After each group demonstrates their role-play, discuss in large group.

Wrap up

Depending on time, you may choose to:

- a. distribute *what would you do review worksheet* and ask participants which of these scenarios they would like to challenge others to answer, on the basis of their renewed insights on guidance.
- b. Distribute *Discipline and Guidance Review Worksheet* and ask participants to write answers for questions 5 and 11.
- c. Play the Guidance Game.

PRACTICE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Consider the following scenarios. Use your knowledge of conflict resolution to create role-plays that demonstrate what you would do in these situations.

- a. Quinton and Jessica are arguing over who will use the new red shovel. They are both yelling, pulling, and tugging on the shovel. What do you do?
- b. Maria and Will both want to be the doctor in the dramatic play area today. There is only one stethoscope. What do you do?
- d. Stefan and Joseph are yelling at each other about who had the pizza cutter first at the play dough table. What do you do?
- e. Two children are throwing punches at each other. What do you do?
- f. One child comes to you crying because she says the group in housekeeping won't let her play. What do you do?

Coach or Referee?

Facilitating Conflict Resolution

Scenario 1

Jason: You got to use the new bike last time.

P.J.: No! I want it.

Jason: It's not fair. You're a dummy.

P.J.: I'm taking the bike.

Ms. Donna: Boys, since you can't play nicely with the new bike, I'm putting it away, and you both go and play somewhere else. And I don't want to hear you calling people names, Jason.

Scenario 2

Jason: You got to use the new bike last time.

P.J.: No! I want it.

Jason: It's not fair. You're a dummy.

Ms. Donna: Hey, guys, sounds like there's a problem here. How about parking the bike and seeing if you can figure out what to do. Why don't you start by telling each other what you need.

Referees try to solve the problem by quickly assigning penalties and telling children what to do, often assigning blame. They control all the action, often having to step in again, since the individuals have not dealt with their feelings or learned how to communicate effectively to solve the problem themselves.

Coaches recognize that inexperienced children need help and support in working their problems through. They teach and demonstrate new skills, and provide opportunities to practice the new behaviors.

Steps in facilitating conflict resolution

- g. Stop the conflict and help participants cool off. Let children know you perceive they have a problem. Stay neutral, calm, and unemotional.
- h. Encourage children to take turns talking and listening to each, expressing their needs and wants with "I" statements.
- i. Summarize the problem, focusing on the perspectives of all.
- j. Encourage their contributions of ideas for solving the problem.
- k. Ask children to agree on one of the ideas to try, helping them to define the steps to take and get started.
- l. As children become able to follow these steps on their own, give them reminders that they can work it out, and positive reinforcement for solving their own problems.

Discipline and Guidance

Review Worksheet

1. What is the ultimate goal of guidance and discipline?
2. How does the arrangement of the room affect children's behavior?
3. Compare the commonly accepted concept of discipline with guidance.
4. How does scheduling and planning, etc. contribute to an orderly classroom?
5. What can you do to minimize discipline problems?
6. What do we mean by positive reinforcement as a means of guiding behavior?
7. What can the teacher do in advance to minimize behavior problems?
8. List 5 ways you can reinforce positive behavior.
9. How can you help children deal with the many stresses of life today?
10. How does careful planning reduce discipline problems?
11. How have these activities changed your ideas of discipline? What will you do differently now?

What Would You Do?

Review Worksheet

Consider each of the situations below. Write beneath each situation what you would do. Discuss your answers with your director or another child care professional.

1. Joey and Billy are playing in the sandbox. Joey is throwing sand into the air. Some gets in Billy's eyes. Billy gets very angry and socks Joey in the stomach. How would you handle this?
2. Maria becomes frustrated when one block will not stay on top of her tower. She knocks her tower to the floor and lies down on the floor kicking and screaming. What would you do?
3. Parker is poking his friend John during story time. John becomes angry and hits Parker. If you were an assistant sitting with the group while the teacher was reading, what would you do?

If you were the person reading the story and you were the only adult in the room, what would you do?

4. LaDonna is making fun of Shenella. She is calling her names and laughing at her. Shanella is very upset. What would you do and say?
5. Quinton and Jessica are arguing over who will ride the tricycle. They are both yelling, pulling and tugging on the tricycle. How do you handle this situation?
6. Jason is in the habit of using vulgar language at school. What can you do to stop this behavior? If it continues, what else can you do?

Focus on developing a trusting teacher/child relationship based on mutual respect.

Be consistent. The same consequences should follow the same misbehavior.

Deliver discipline immediately. If there is a delay between the misbehavior and the consequence, the child may not see a connection.

The consequence should be as relevant to the misbehavior as possible and be appropriate for the child's age.

Make your request appropriate for the child's age and stage. Don't expect her to be like an adult; she is a child evolving into an adult.

Be a positive role model for your children. Talk less and act more!

Let children know what you expect. Don't assume that he automatically knows. Be clear, simple, and direct.

Put requests positively: Tell her what she can do, rather than what she can't. "You can turn down the TV, or choose not to watch TV."

Use discipline methods that are educational, teach self-reliance, and build character.

Avoid negative statements, sarcasm, criticism, name-calling, and labeling.

Begin requests with "As soon as": "As soon as you put up the toys, we'll get ice cream." "As soon as you finish the homework, we can play a game."

Use humor to reduce tension, but do not make fun of children.

A game-like approach is often helpful "I'll close my eyes and see how far I can count while you get your jackets on."

Write a message to an older child instead of giving a verbal request. This helps to avoid a confrontation.

Teach how to problem solve: "What's a way to handle this?" or "How can you . . .?" Help him consider alternatives and understand effects of each

Avoid threats because they are like dares and "egg on" children.

Offer choices. Let children choose, and deal with consequences. "You may get ready for rest and hear a story, or finish your puzzle, but skip the story."

Make a deal with children: "If you help me get snack ready now, I will read your favorite book at circle time before we eat."

Help children understand that you and others have feelings and needs: "When you cooperate with me, then I want to cooperate with you."

Prepare for changes: "We'll leave in a few minutes." or, "In 15 minutes you will need to get ready for lunch, so you should finish the game now."

Brainstorm: "I'm unhappy at lunch with the loud voices. Is anyone else?" This gives each child a chance to express feelings and find solutions.

Show appreciation for children's efforts: "Good job, Billy." Or, "I like the way you handled that problem, Julie."

Be encouraging: "I know that you can do the right things." Or, "I expect you to be kind."

Debrief. When a child makes a mistake, help him understand other options he might have chosen.

Avoid phrases such as: "You always . . .", or, "Why don't you ever . . .", or "How many times have I told you . . .?"

Don't compare children, especially siblings. "Your sister always puts her clothes up. Why can't you . . .?" rarely brings improvement.

Avoid lecturing. Make your point and move on.

Do not bring up the past. Reminding children of past problems seldom helps.

Offer choices to avoid conflict: "Do you want corn flakes or Cheerios for breakfast?"

Reflect the child's feelings to show you understand. "I know that you are disappointed that you can't go."

Discipline Card Game

Instructions

**To be played in groups of 2 to 4 people
As a review or reinforcement activity**

Make sets of cards by copying the next page on sheets of 2" x 3 1/2" labels, 10 to a sheet and the following page on sheets of 1" x 2 5/8" labels, 30 to a sheet. Make as many sets as the number of groups. Stick the labels on index cards or pieces of construction paper cut to size. Each group will need a set of cards and a die.

Put a stack of cards in the center of each group. Using a die, each group rolls to see who plays first. The highest number is the first to play. Then the play continues clockwise. If you do not have enough dice, write 1-6 on pieces of heavy paper and have the group draw a number rather than roll a die.

To play, each person will draw a card and read it to the group. Then the group discusses the information on the card, telling how they implement or will implement the suggestions on the card. The game ends when all cards have been drawn and discussed.

For variation, have staff make sets of cards based on their own experiences in their classrooms. Then use their situations as the basis for the discussions.

Rules provide an active, rather than reactive, position with children. Rules put you in a position of leadership.

Rules support self-regulation, self-control, and impulse control which are the goals of discipline.

Rules should be short and to the point:

“You may go outside after you put on your coat.”

Rules should be stated positively: “Walk in the room” versus “Don’t run.” and “You may ask for a second helping.” versus “Don’t grab.”

Start one new rule at a time. Too many rules at once are confusing and overwhelming. Younger children can deal with only one or two rules.

Rules may need to be altered as the child matures and as situations change.

Have a plan if rules aren’t followed. Offer alternatives when possible. “Kevin, since you refused to pick up the blocks as we agreed, you can choose to help Jacob clean up the area or not use blocks tomorrow.

Rules should specify the behavior you want. Vague rules cause misunderstanding and are hard to reinforce. “A clean art area means crayons are in the pan, smocks are on the hooks, and the table is wiped.

Engage children in creating rules and they are more likely to follow them. They also learn problem-solving skills: “Jan, what is a good guide for sharing this toy? You think you can use it awhile, then Ann can? I agree. Good guide!”

Be consistent once the rules are established. “Kevin, we decided that you would use it awhile, then Laura would. Do you remember our agreement?”

Rules about Rules

Rules provide a way to help children understand that there are boundaries and guidelines for what's acceptable behavior. It is easier for children to uphold a standard when they know what the expectation is.

Rules are policies which govern:

1. **Movement** - "You may ride your trike on the sidewalk, not by the swings."
2. **Belongings** - "Your jacket belongs on the hook in your cubby, not on the floor."
3. **Responsibilities** - "The puzzles need to be picked up before we go outside."
4. **Living habits** - "Rest time is after lunch." or "We come to the table with clean hands."

TRANSITIONS

Developed for Arkansas State University Childhood Services
By Carol Gestwicki

This training consists of 4 sessions on transitions to be used for staff development. Each session could take 30-45 minutes, depending on the amount of discussion.

Outline of Sessions

- I. The Challenges of Transitions
- II. Principles of Good Transitions (could be two parts to this session, as needed)
- III. Troubleshooting Routines During the Day
- IV. Practice in Transitions

Directions for trainers are marked in **bold**.

SESSION I: The Challenges of Transitions

Materials Needed

Flip chart and markers, or whiteboard and erasable markers
Individual paper and pencils for participants
Copies of ECERS-R, or pages for Item 34
Handout: *How Many Transitions in Your Day?*

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Reasons why transitions are difficult for teachers and for children
- Thinking about individuals' concerns regarding transitions.
- Ideas from ECERS-R related to transitions and routines

Beginning Activity

Allow participants to gather and begin conversing casually among themselves. Interrupt them in the middle of the conversation (you can apologize and explain later.) Begin giving a series of confusing orders that call for everyone to move about the room. You can make them up as you go, for example, every third person should go to the corner to your left. All the others should choose another corner to go to. If your name begins with a letter in the first half of the alphabet, go to the corner diagonally opposite from the one you started out in. If your birthday is in the last half of the year, find a partner and go to a corner where neither of you has been before. As people get confused and start talking, raise your voice to yell above them. After several of these moves, people should have experienced a fair bit of confusion, as well as crowded movement about the room.

Debrief the experience, hoping that participants will point out perceptions to introduce ideas about transitions:

- interruptions, confusing directions, too much movement, and too much control
- can lead to resistance and chaos.
- when children are asked to stop doing something and get ready to begin doing something else, this is a change, and individuals react differently to change.

Discussion About Transitions

Make sure that participants understand what is meant by the term “transitions.” **On the board, create a sample schedule** that is used in one of your classrooms, marking the large activity blocks. Then **point out the periods of transition** following each of these activity blocks, when children and teachers top that activity and do what is necessary to prepare for the next. **Have the group identify** all the activities that are going on during each of the transitions.

Sample Schedule

Free Choice Time

Transition (involves finishing work of chosen activity, putting materials away, using bathroom and washing to prepare for snack, helping prepare tables and food for snack, sitting at snack table.)

Snack

Transition (involves finishing snack, clearing away dishes and trash and cleaning tables, any necessary bathroom tasks, and settling children on the carpet before circle time.)

Circle Time

Transition (involves dismissing children from circle, allowing them to prepare for outdoor play with bathroom visits s needed, putting on outdoor clothing, and moving from the classroom to the playground area.)

Outdoor Play Time, etc.

As the group generates the lists of all the tasks to be done by both teachers and children during each of the transitions, they begin to appreciate why there is potential for chaos and confusion during these times. **Make the point** that most of the difficulties that arise in the classroom arise during transition times.

Then **use Teacher Handout #3** How Many Transitions in Your Day? with teachers. **Allow enough time** for them to complete their sheet, and then to discuss, either with a partner or with the entire group. Ask them to bring this handout back with them in session II.

Difficulties of Transitions

Ask participants to write down 2 things on their piece of paper

- a. the name of a child who seems to have the most behavior difficulties during times of change during the classroom day, and
- b. the teacher's own personal least liked transition time of the day

Discuss, asking them to contribute ideas about why that particular child has difficulty during transitions. Discuss the possibilities: differences in ability, including fine motor and self help skills; differences in understanding of language and routines; differences in habits of responding to directions; home experiences that allow them to learn habits of dawdling or depending too much on adult assistance; individual is disturbed by activity and multiple instructions, as well as having to hurry up; too much waiting time.

Then **ask** staff to identify some of the reasons that they selected their particular least favorite transition: lots of movement, noise, busy-ness and confusion; trying to rush through transition which triggers resistant responses by children; trying to manage in too authoritarian way, have not understood that transitions need planning. All of these factors may help them realize there are things they can do to improve transitions within their classrooms. **ASK THEM TO KEEP THIS PAGE HANDY IN THEIR NOTES TO REFER TO IN LATER SESSIONS.**

Guidelines from ECERS-R

Before going further, it is appropriate to see what ECERS-R says regarding transitions. **Refer to Item number 34** in the rating scale. This item is primarily about schedules. Note that indicator 3.1 points out that children are helped by moving through a predictable sequence of events each day, when large time blocks follow in the same order each day. And, as in 3.2, the sequence is what is important in a schedule, rather than a rigid, by-the-clock adherence.

This item gives 2 very specific indicators to consider in planning for transitions that will help lessen the chaos. Indicator 5.4 says there should be no long period of waiting during transitions between daily events. This means that children who get their toys put away promptly and finish first in the bathroom should not have to wait a long time at the snack table, with nothing to do and no supervision, before they are able to start snack. And the ones who get their coats on quickly should not have to just stand around while the teachers supervise slower children in the bathroom and help with zippers. Children usually get quickly bored during long waiting periods and may get involved in troublesome behaviors just to entertain themselves while waiting. One of the challenges during transition times is to minimize these empty waiting times.

The other indicator in this item that deals directly with transitions is 7.1, stating that excellent classrooms will provide for smooth transitions between the daily events. While this is a fairly general statement, the examples provided suggest some of the strategies that support

smooth transitions: materials needed for the next activity will be prepared before the current activity ends, and trying to move just a few children at a time, rather than the whole group. Such suggestions imply a degree of planning of teacher actions during transition times. Smooth transitions do not just happen. Later you will consider other items in the ECERS-R that relate to managing routines such as mealtime, bathroom time, and naptime.

NEXT SESSION—will look at principles of good transitions. Between now and then, ask participants to do 2 things.

- a. Put a sheet of paper on the wall in their classroom and make two columns on it, heading one as Activity and the other as Transition. Every time they encounter one or more children having trouble with expected behavior, notice whether it is during one of the regular time blocks on the schedule, such as during free choice time, circle, etc., or whether it is during one of the transition periods between activities. Make a check in the appropriate column on the page. Bring their totals for each column to the next meeting.
- b. Arrange to take a few minutes to go to a classroom that is not their own. This will help them be more objective in the observation. Arrive so they can settle down to watch a transition time. Good ones to select include the cleanup period following free choice time to the next activity, or from snack to prepare and begin the next activity. With pencil and paper handy, prepare to watch and record notes on the following:
 - How did the teacher indicate it was time for a change? Did the children get advance warning or not?
 - How did the children respond—immediate cooperation and move to the necessary tasks, or resistance, or ignoring, or other responses?
 - Where were the teachers during transition?—Doing what?
 - What were the children doing during the transition? Did they have specific responsibilities or assignments?
 - How much waiting time was there for the children? If the waiting time was minimal, how had the teachers avoided an empty waiting time?
 - Were any cues or transition songs used?
 - What was the general impression of the transition? How comfortable did the children seem? And the adults?

Bring the notes to the next meeting.

How Many Transitions in Your Day?

On another sheet of paper, write down your current schedule, beginning with the first event of the day, and continuing with each activity or routine that occurs. Follow the children through a full day.

1. Between each activity or routine on the schedule mark a T in a red pencil to indicate Transition. Now count up the number of transitions during the day. Number:

2. List here the most difficult transitions of the day:

3. Estimate the number of minutes children spend waiting during transitions, that is, from the time they complete an activity until the next activity begins. For example, after children have put away toys or finished using the bathroom, how long is it until the next activity begins? Put a number down beside each of the transitions you noted above. Add up the total for the day.

Total waiting time:

Keep this available to compare, after you have worked on transitions.

SESSION II: Principals of Good Transitions

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers, or whiteboard and markers

Papers and markers for participant use

Handouts: *Ten Principles for Good Transitions*

Helper's Chart

How Many Transitions in Your Day? (completed during session I)

Transition Songs and Activities

Concepts to be emphasized in this session

- Good transitions have to be planned and structured carefully
- Use of the principles to be discussed can improve transitions

Beginning Activity

Ask participants to write the number of difficulties they found during transition times in large numerals on one side of the paper, and the number found during planned activity times on the other. Ask them to walk around the room holding out the transition number to face others. Take a few minutes for participants to see others' numbers, then take seats.

Discuss their findings—presumably this observation will have heightened their awareness of need to consider transitions.

Then move on to **discuss** some of their observations of transitions in another classroom.

Generate a list of comments—if it works out that you are getting both positive and negative observations, separate them on 2 chart pages. Just generate the lists, and then post aside, to refer back to as appropriate in discussion of the principles.

Discussion of Principles of Good Transitions

Distribute the Handout #1, so that staff can follow along and make notes during discussion of the principles. **Take your time discussing** each principle, asking participants to furnish examples of how they apply this principle, or questions on how to implement this in their particular situations. Where appropriate, refer back to points from observations on chart paper. The content provided here under each principle is for trainers to read in advance, to identify the points and examples you want to make during the discussion, and which of the suggested activities related to the handouts you want to do during this session. Depending on the experience of the participants, you may make the decision to actually devote 2 sessions to the topic of the principles, discussing 5 in each session. With more experienced participants, you may be able to complete discussion of all 10 principles in 1 session. You will notice suggested activities before the next session throughout—these will be suggested to participants as various options from which to choose one thing to do before next session.

Minimize the number of transitions.

Refer back to Handout #3 completed last session. Carefully consider these schedules to notice on just how many occasions during the day children have to experience starting and stopping. Go slowly thinking about the day, so you don't miss any transitions. For example, if when your children arrive they gather in another room and then have to come to yours, this is a transition. If they must leave their work/play to go to another room when the library storyteller comes, count this. Look at waiting times too. This is important not only to reduce the number of transitions to gain their cooperation more easily, but also to provide for larger blocks of time for children to really get engaged in their activities. Often teachers are shocked when they count up the number of transitions in a typical day. Perhaps teachers can examine their schedules to find blocks of time or activities that could be combined, to cut down on the number. This is important, because each transition itself may need to take some time, for children to be meaningfully involved and practicing self help skills, and not just rushed through. So too many transitions, even if filled with meaningful activity, may take too much time away from other activities, as well as giving a disjointed feeling to the day.

Now here's a **challenge** for each to consider: can they imagine any changes they could make in the overall schedule or ways of doing things so that children wouldn't have so many transitions? This may mean putting aside all the "But we can't because" or "but we've always" statements that immediately come to mind. If they were going to create a schedule that gave them and the children fairly large, uninterrupted blocks of time and minimized the number of transitions, what would it look like? Often schedules involve needs of others, including scheduled times for playground use, or other shared space or special events. Who would they have to work with to make some changes here?

Make it a goal to cut down on at least one transition.

(You may want to allow time for individuals, pairs, or the whole group to work on this issue, or to assign it for consideration before the next session.)

Give advance warning that a change is about to take place.

Interrupting children abruptly from what they are doing encourages resistance, as well as conveys the unfortunate message that what they are doing is not important, and their feelings not worthy of respect. Incidentally, an advance warning is not suddenly flashing the lights off and on. This is just another form of interruption. An advance warning is a teacher who goes around to children busy at their play and gently states that there are just about five more minutes until it's time to get ready for snack, so they should think about finishing up what they are doing before it's time to put toys away. It is also the teacher who says that the group will have time to sing one more song before they need to get ready for the playground. Or one of the duties on the Helpers' Chart may be the 5-minute person. This child is asked to go around to each center holding up five fingers and announcing "Five more minutes." Advance warning gives children the chance to get ready mentally for the change, and is more likely to encourage cooperation. **Discuss** what techniques they observed teachers using to give advanced warning, and children's responses.

Give children familiar cues about change

Begin clapping, clap-clap-**clap** (two quick claps, followed by a long one with a pause, with the words sto-ry-**time** said with each clap. Repeat this 3 times, and then keep the clapping rhythm and add the words start-ing-**now**. Repeat 3 times, and then add Read-y-**now!** To the 3 sets of claps. Then repeat with silent claps and whispered words. **Explain** that you have just demonstrated a (made-up) cue for change.

When children hear the cleanup song, or notes, played on a triangle, or a particular music tape, they are reminded of the repetition of a familiar pattern. The cues encourage the children to pay attention, and to behave according to the habits formed by repeated experience. Cues are usually environmental, something that children notice with their senses, like songs to sing or a signal to see. Some preschool and primary teachers, for example, stand with their hands placed on top of their heads when they want children to listen to their instructions. Children notice and imitate this behavior, and the teacher speaks when she has the attention of all children whose hands are also on top of their heads. (This has the added bonus of keeping children's hands away from work that might be distracting, or from others.) When teachers help children recognize consistent routines by using such repeated cues, children know what to expect from day to day, and cooperate more readily, almost without thinking, as their actions have become a habit. **Discuss** examples of cues that staff observed during the transitions, or cues they use. **Distribute** copies of Teacher Handout #4 *Transition Songs and Activities*. Ask staff to try a new kind of cue before they come back to Session III prepared to tell others how it went.

Make sure that directions given for children's participation are clear and specific.

While adults may have a fair idea of what needs to happen during any transition to get ready for the next activity, it is important to realize that children need to be guided through the steps. It helps when teachers establish eye contact and touch children gently to be sure they have their

attention when giving specific instructions. “Time to put our toys back on the shelves” is more meaningful than “Time to clean up.” When directions are given one, or at most two, at a time, it is easier for children to process, remember, and act. Consider what happens when teachers say, “Put your toys away, use the bathroom and wash your hands before snack, and come and sit at the table.” It is not uncommon to see some young preschoolers who received such directions going directly to the bathroom or snack table, because they were unable to process several commands at once. One direction at a time is best for children four years or under, and for many older children who have difficulty with transitions.

Ask for examples of clear instructions observed during transition.

Use one adult to begin the next activity.

If there are two teachers in the same room, they should not both be doing the same thing at the same time. One teacher can be continuing to encourage the children who are slower at putting their toys away, while keeping an eye on those moving to complete bathroom tasks. The other can be with the children who are already seated for snack, having conversation or leading a song while they are waiting for the other children to join them. Or one teacher can accompany the children who already have their coats on to the playground, while the other remains with the group who need more help and time with zippers. When the next activity doesn’t have to wait until everyone is ready, it provides incentive to move on, and doesn’t penalize children who are either quicker or slower paced in their abilities. Allowing activities to begin without everyone ready shows that teachers understand both that children need time to complete their self-help tasks comfortably and with feelings of success, and that children who are ready sooner should not have to wait with nothing to do while their friends finish. This moving on to the next activity avoids empty waiting times—remember that was one of the things the ECERS mentioned specifically. A classroom that allows for such comfortable self-pacing and something interesting to do conveys acceptance of individual patterns. Teachers who have a repertoire of songs or finger plays can fill in the gaps so that slower children do not miss exciting new plans, and faster children are still having enjoyable participation. Obviously it takes communication between the two teachers to be sure that each adult is available where most needed. Some teachers plan to alternate weekly responsibilities: “You take the bathroom supervision this week, and I’ll be ready to start circle time as a few children gather.” When one adult is sitting with the children finishing circle time, the other can be preparing materials to be set out on tables ready for the next activity when the children leave the circle. Again, planning and communicating the separate roles and responsibilities of the adults is an essential element of smooth functioning.

When teachers work alone, it sometimes takes more creativity to follow this principle. Sometimes teachers start a song or an “I spy” game that everyone can join in, whether they are sitting at the table, or washing hands, and the teacher can have an idea in both directions. Empty, unsupervised waiting times are the enemy of smooth transitions, so devising methods to make sure children are pleasantly occupied is time well-spent.

Discuss how teachers saw this principle in action during their observations.

Allow for movement of a few children, rather than the whole group.

Chaos results when children are all dismissed to go to the table or to cubbies to get jackets at the same time. Too many children moving all at the same time may bump into each other and move without purpose, or have to wait too long for their turn in the bathroom or getting the teacher's assistance with zippers. The whole group can be broken up naturally, by the differing rates of children completing their tasks. It is just natural that some children will be ready to use the toilets and sinks before others have finished picking up their toys. At other times, teachers have to find ways of dividing the group, to dismiss them from circle time to get their coats, for example. Depending on the age of the children and the concepts they understand, teachers may ask everyone wearing red to get ready for outside play. She may chat informally with the remaining children while the other teacher supervises and assists the first children, and then send on the children wearing blue. Another time she may send children who respond to a variety of clues: "I'm looking for children who have a dog for a pet," and later "I'm looking for children who have a baby in their family." Older children may respond to letters that begin their names, months of their birthday, or any number of other devices. The technique of finding just a few to move at a time has the added bonus of giving children something to focus their attention on during a transition time.

One caution for teachers is not to use a transition device that is so time-consuming that the activity itself creates an empty waiting time. For example, when a class of two year olds has to wait while, one by one, the teachers calls each child by name to jump over the candlestick (Mary be nimble, Mary be quick, Mary jump over the candlestick), especially when some of the children may want to prolong their turn, the transition activity works against the teacher.

It should also be noted that when the two teachers who work together have already learned to use the principle about both not having to do things at the same time, it makes it possible to break the group up. Instead of waiting for the whole group to leave circle time before both adults move, one adult can already be with the first children who have been dismissed, as we talked about in principle #5.

Discuss applications and questions about this.

Give children classroom responsibilities and opportunities to assist peers.

Nowhere is it written that all of the routines in the classroom are the sole responsibility of the teachers. Some adults feel that it is just faster and more efficient for them to be the ones who set or clean tables, or wash all the paintbrushes, or zip all the jackets. Other teachers' cultural orientations may make them feel that part of their nurturing role is to do everything for children to indicate their caring. In reality, young children thrive on opportunities to make a real contribution in their world. They develop physical and social competence as they practice the skills needed in many routines.

When children take on various helping tasks such as table setting or washing, or handing out paper towels to others in the bathroom, or helping a friend who has not yet learned to tie her own

shoelaces, they feel important and experience what it means to be a helping part of the community. What's more, teachers are free to be with children who need more assistance, during the transition, or to start the next activity. Not incidentally, teachers who are not dashing about to get some routine task completed are more relaxed.. children are quick to pick up on nonverbal cues from their teachers. When the teacher's voice remains calm and low during the transition, children move more easily and comfortably to do what they need to do. When teachers appear increasingly stressed, with voices rising and anxious activity, children's behavior will mirror this strain.

When classroom teachers assign meaningful jobs to a number of helpers, they discover that transitions can certainly run smoother. Having a helper chart system displayed on the wall helps children realize they will all have turns to be involved, again adding to the sense of predictability in the classroom. Encouraging the attitude of helpfulness builds a sense of being able to make an important contribution, even in youngest children. In too many homes, busy parents have not given children opportunities to do simple chores, so this may be a new experience for some. (Incidentally, this may be an important topic to share with parents, the idea that meaningful involvement may help their child's self esteem as well as make a contribution to household life. Being busy on assigned tasks ensures no empty waiting time. Children also gain by realizing they can receive help from others in addition to adults.

Discuss what participants are already doing to involve children in routines during transition times. Look together at Teacher Handout #2 *Helper's Chart*, discussing the variety of responsibilities there are and making additions appropriate to participants' situations. Suggest that participants may want to create such a chart for their classroom, and could bring to next session

Use imagination and playfulness to help children keep focused during transitions.

Activity **Ask** participants to quickly stand up and get in a line. **Bark out orders** and controlling directions, such as "We're not going anywhere until everybody is standing still and right behind the person in front of you." **Call out individuals** by name who seem not to be obeying. After everyone is looking properly terrified , **point out** that similar tactics are often employed in early childhood classrooms.

Often when teachers are concerned with keeping order and control during transitions, particularly those where children must be taken somewhere distant from the classroom, such as the playground or gymnasium, they revert to semi-military procedures of lining up and achieving perfect control under the adult's direction. **Ask** participants to recall such experiences as children, and from current demonstration—how does that make individuals feel?

Obviously teachers want to avoid children running wildly, with the possibility of someone getting hurt or disturbing other classes, but there are more developmentally appropriate ways to keep children together. It is important to remember that the young children with whom we spend our days are most readily engaged through imaginative and playful ideas. More playful, child-oriented approaches take advantage of children's imagination and willingness for group participation. For example, a teacher begins the game of quiet follow-the-leader down the hall,

first patting her head, then bending her knees slightly to walk, then raising her hands in the air, then waving first one hand and then the other. The children are so busy watching for the next move that they quickly and quietly arrive at the door to the playground without the teacher once having had to remind them to walk quietly. Another teacher has instituted a game of pretending the group is a family of mice trying to sneak past the door where a pretend cat lives before the cat hears them and pounces; it is very quiet when those children tiptoe down the hall, maintaining their control through playful imagination rather than teacher orders. Sometimes the playful suggestion comes from an activity just completed; after reading a book about springtime, the teacher suggests that the children move down the hallway like beautiful butterflies—making beautiful motions with their arms, but no sound!

Plan transitions.

Most teachers realize that the daily activities will not go well if they do not spend some time planning the ideas and the needed materials. But most teachers rarely spend time planning the transitions between the activities. Smooth transitions just don't occur magically. They require considering: the expectations for children and adults during the changes; breaking the instructions for expected activities into manageable and clearly understandable parts for the children; thinking through the necessary adult preparations and roles to play. While you and your co-workers are working to create smoother transitions in your classroom, it is important that you spend time analyzing how the principles are being put into practice, and planning how you will try to change things for the benefit of you and your children. Eventually it will become second nature to move through smooth transitions. Until that time, it is important to continue to plan just exactly how you will give the children advance warning, how you will communicate your instructions to them, what cues you will use to remind them of desired activity, and the separate roles that the adults will play in guiding children and avoiding waiting time. Planning and thinking about the whole day's curriculum activities will help teachers look ahead, to consider what advance preparations need to be done, so that they do not have to play catch up all day long, or make a mad dash for needed materials while children wait.

Discuss.

Modify principles of transitions to fit your situation.

If you teach toddlers or school-aged children, or if you work on your own in a family childcare home, you may think that these ideas just don't quite fit with your classroom needs. Rather than disregard the principles, it is important to recognize that each principle is based on an idea that can actually help you to create smoother transitions in your particular circumstances. What is essential is to ask how you can, for example avoid empty waiting times in your family child care home when it is just you busy preparing lunch and the children need to get their hands washed before eating. (A tape that plays familiar songs for everyone to sing along with, and ones that are timed so each child washes during that particular song.) Or how you can keep your school-aged children's attention focused as they walk down the long hall from the cafeteria to the gymnasium without having to resort to orders or threats. (Have them keep silent count of things you see shaped like a triangle, and tell you when you get to the gym, and the one who has the number

closest to the teacher's secret number can be the first to choose an activity.) The principles are meant to guide thinking about creating smooth transitions in individual situations. Creative applications can come from the staff.

Discuss how to apply these principles in particular situations.

Go back to the first comments teachers had made on observations of transitions. Which principles can you recognize being enacted?

As you conclude, ask teachers to be particularly aware of their transitions before the next session. **Challenge** them each to take one of the following assignments and try it several times before the next session, and be prepared to share their experiences with the group.

Options (or teacher's choice):

1. Try to organize schedule to reduce number of transitions.
2. Plan to introduce a new cue to your children.
3. Introduce a new system for classroom helpers to facilitate transition routines.

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD TRANSITIONS

1. Minimize the number of transitions by planning your schedule.
2. Give advance warning of change.
3. Give familiar cues about change.
4. Make directions for children's participation clear, specific, and brief.
5. Use one adult to begin the next activity—avoid empty waiting time.
6. Allow for movement of a few children, rather than the whole group.
7. Give children classroom responsibilities and opportunities to assist peers.
8. Use imagination and playfulness to focus children's attention during transitions.
9. Plan transitions.
10. Modify principles to fit the particular situation, instead of disregarding principles

Helper's Chart

Giving children classroom responsibilities helps smooth transitions, as well as builds a sense of cooperation. Make sure there are tasks to assign to each child in the classroom. Some possibilities include:

- Trash collector
- Song Leader
- Sweeper
- Chairperson (pushing in chairs)
- Art director (cleaning brushes, etc in the art area)
- Cup person
- Napkins
- Plates
- Flatware
- Plant care
- Animal care
- Light person
- Door holder
- Library person (straightening up books)
- Five minute person

If you need more, see what else fits your classroom: weather person, calendar helper, attendance taker, and errand person.

Make a permanent wall hanger. One idea is a circle arrangement, with the outer circle showing symbols and words for each job, and an inner circle that can be turned each day, displaying the children's names.

Another idea is to make a poster board listing each job, again labeled with both symbol and word, and a library pocket beside each. Make cards with each child's name and symbol, and change the assignments each week.

TRANSITION SONGS AND ACTIVITIES

CLEAN UP

(Tune of London Bridge)

Cleanup time is almost here, almost here, almost here

Cleanup time is almost here

Are you ready?

(Tune of Farmer in the Dell)

We're picking up our toys

We're picking up our toys

We're putting all our toys away

We're picking up our toys

We're cleaning up our room

We're cleaning up our room

We're putting all our toys away

We're cleaning up our room

(Tune of

Clean up, clean up

Everybody, everywhere

Clean up, clean up

Everybody do your share

(Tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

If you're cleaning up the room, say, "I am" (children respond "I am")

If you're cleaning up the room, say, "I am" (children respond "I am")

If you're cleaning up the room, if you're cleaning up the room,

If you're cleaning up the room, say, "I am" ("I am!")

Note: this can be modified to other times of the day: "If you're ready to go outside, say "I am";

"If you're ready to hear a story, whisper "I am"; "If you washed your hands for snack, say "I did."

(Tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle.")

Twinkle twinkle little star,

Stop and clean up where you are.

Time to put the toys away.

We'll use them another day.

Twinkle, twinkle little star

Stop and clean up where you are.

Note: Children who need special reminders may focus attention when you insert their names:

"Twinkle, twinkle little Rose".

GATHERING IN A GROUP

(Tune of "Where is Thumbkin")
Where is David, Where is Johnny
Where are they, where are they?
Won't you come and join us,
Won't you come and join us
Sit right here, sit right here.

(Tune of "If You're Happy and You Know it.")
Put your bottom on the rug, on the rug
Put your bottom on the rug, on the rug
Put your bottom on the rug
And give yourself a hug
Put your bottom on the rug, on the rug

Note: this is one of those multi-purpose songs that can be changed to fit the occasion: Put your feet on the line, on the line, etc. Put your feet on the line, and you're looking mighty fine." Or Put your hands in your lap, in your lap, etc. Put your hands in your lap, then give them a little clap."

(Tune of "Mary had a Little Lamb.")
Please come and read with me,
Read with me,
Read with me.
Please come and read with me,
For it's story time.

Another multipurpose song: "Please come and eat with me, For it's snack time." Or "Please put on your coat with me, For it's playground time."

Chant:
Criss-cross applesauce,
Give a little clap
Criss-cross applesauce,
Put them in your lap.
Criss-cross applesauce,
Quiet as can be (Whispering)
Criss-cross applesauce,
Eyes on me. (Pointing)

DISMISSAL

Some nice rhyming ideas for dismissal from Feldman (2000), so that each child can both participate in the clapping game, and listen for their name, or other clue:

Bibbity Bobbity Boo

Bibbity bobbity boo

Who are you?

Bibbity Bobbity b-----(child's name, with first letter dropped and substituting "b", as Bibbity bobbity Bimmy)

You are Jimmy

Apples, peaches,

Oranges, plums,

Tell me when your birthday comes (Pointing to a child, who then says her birth date.)

Cat, dog, fish, mouse,

What is the number of your house?

Ring, ring,

Is anybody home?

What is the number of your telephone?

A,E,I,O (as you point to each child, then)

U may go to a learning center, (or line up to go outside, or may wash your hands for snack.)

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo.

To a center you may go.

One potato, two potato, three potato, four,

You may line up at the door.

Walk like an animal:

Teachers may show picture cards of animals, or make sounds of a particular animal, and children are dismissed one at a time, walking like that animal.

FILLING THE GAPS, AVOIDING EMPTY WAITING

Choose a Song

Make a list of all the children's favorite songs—Allow children to take turns pointing a "magic wand" to choose the song they would like to sing.

Hide the Bunny

Take a favorite stuffed animal along with you when you go to a place where you know you and the children may have a wait. Let children take turns hiding the animal, and then giving others clues about where to find the toy.

A game like I spy can fill many minutes:

(Tune of Row, row your boat)

Look, look, look around

Look around our room

Tell me when you see something (color, shape, beginning with a p)

Look around our room.

Or

Tune (" Oh do you know the Muffin Man?")

Do you see the (circle shape)

The (circle shape), the (circle shape)?

Do you see the (circle shape)

Somewhere in the room?

A child is chosen to get up and touch something with that shape.

Yes, we see the (circle shape)

The (circle shape), the (circle shape).

Yes we see the (circle shape)

Somewhere in the room.

Whatever concepts you wish to review with the children may be inserted: "color red", "number six", letter "B", or "word Monday."

Imagination Games

Stimulate children's creative thinking with a question:

If you could not use your feet, how would you get to the door?

If you could be any animal you would like, which would it be?

If you were as small as a mouse, where could you go that you're too big to go now?

(Tune of "Here we go Round the Mulberry Bush.")

This is the way we twirl around,
Twirl around, twirl around
This is the way we twirl around,
So early Sunday morning.

This is the way we jump up and down
This is the way we swim around
This is the way we run around
This is the way we hop up and down
This is the way we dance around
This is the way we sit right down.

If you're wearing RED,
Put your hands on your head.
If you're wearing BLACK,
Then touch your back.
If you're wearing BROWN,
Touch the ground.
If you're wearing GREEN,
Wash your hands real clean.
If you're wearing BLUE,
Put your hands on your shoe.
If you're wearing PINK,
Then think and think.
If you're wearing GRAY,
Have a nice day.
If ORANGE is what you wear,
Then touch your hair.
If you're wearing WHITE,
Squeeze your hands real tight.
If you're wearing PURPLE,
Say, "Murple, gurple."
If you're wearing YELLOW,
Wave to that fellow.
You're all looking mighty fine,
And that's the end of the color rhyme! (Feldman 2000).

You will find many other ideas, songs, and rhymes in the resource books listed.

SESSION III: Troubleshooting Routine Transitions during the Day

Materials Needed

Chart paper and markers, or whiteboard and markers
Papers and pencils for participants
Copies of ECERS-R, pages for Items 9, 10, 11, and 12
Parent Handout #1 *Good Mornings*
Parent Handout #2 *I Can Do It!*

Concepts to be emphasized during this session

- Routine times of the day involve transitions
- Attention to routine times makes them go smoother and enhances learning opportunities
- ECERS-R offers guidance for routine times
- Parents can support children's classroom learning

Beginning Activity

Facilitate a show and share time, with participants demonstrating changed schedules, new cues, or helper charts, and discussing classroom experiences with attention to transition times. Allow plenty of time for discussion, questions, and comments. This could inspire other participants to try still other ideas.

Discussion of Routines

On a chart or board, list the routine times that will be discussed during this session:

Arrival time

Cleanup time

Mealtimes/snacks

Bathroom times

Naptime

Ask participants to pull out the page they wrote on during the first session. Take a count and mark it down, for numbers who most disliked that particular time, asking them to identify reasons—write these down also for reference as you discuss each time.

Discuss each period, incorporating ideas and suggestions of participants for what has worked for them, and including consideration of ECERS indicators for each routine. Particular times of the day require particular strategies.

Arrival Time

Point out the difficulty many children have entering the classroom at the beginning of the day. They are often tired, or reflecting the anxieties of parents who are rushing to their work. It is hard to say goodbye to their parent for the day. It can help these children when:

- an adult is available to guide them to enter and get settled. When teachers are free to give some person attention at this time, the day can get off to a smoother start. Teachers have to plan for this availability, from planning easy to set up materials that children can begin to use independently, to planning who will have the responsibility of welcoming children and their accompanying parents. When teachers arrive at work on time, they are able to prepare and be relaxed and welcoming.
- there is a daily activity to complete when they enter. When there is a ritual that children do when they enter each day, this familiarity is comforting and allows children to get started. Examples could be: a sign-in sheet for preschoolers beside that for parents (this also becomes a useful record of developing literacy); a magnetic or Velcro board for younger children to place their picture or symbol on, from a nearby basket; washing hands and putting on a work shirt; having the teacher accompany them to the Waving Window for a last goodbye for Mom. Rituals help children make predictable responses.
- a quiet, welcoming environment is prepared. Classical music playing softly allows children to perceive soothing calm as they enter. Materials displayed on tables ready for use invite children to come in and begin.
- parents support the routine and ritual. When parents are educated to know what they can do to promote a positive transition at the start of the day, they can become powerful allies. Many parents would be glad to help, but just aren't sure what behaviors would be most helpful. **Look** at the Good Morning Parent Handout #1 to consider how teachers could use this with parents.

Discuss any other ideas, and anything that was generated in the earlier entries on the chart paper. **Look at** Item 9 in ECERS to see how these suggestions would support evidence for the indicators.

Cleanup Time

This may have been one of the times noted by the teachers as their least favorite, having to confront resistant children. **Discuss** these ideas to help make this transition more positive.

- create an environment that makes cleanup more manageable and easier. For example, clearly label shelves with pictures from catalogs or boxes, or simple drawings, or shape outlines, so that children can see where the materials should be returned. Use clearly marked trays, buckets, or plastic storage boxes to separate materials. Such cues help cleanup become a learning activity of matching, as well as maintaining order on the shelves. (See indicators 7.2 in Item 4, 7.2 in Item 19, and 7.2 in Item 22 in ECERS-R.)
- establish expectations that many materials will be put back during the play periods (though obviously this does not happen with toddlers, or sometimes when preschoolers are caught up in a play theme.) Children can learn to put one manipulative back before begging to use another. Teachers can quietly do some restoring of order as children play, so that the final cleanup is not so overwhelming.
- use cleanup songs to gather and motivate children. The idea of singing while you work has old roots in history. **Look at** some of the cleanup songs in Teacher Handout #4, and sing one or two.
- make cleanup a time of responsibility and social interaction. For example, when David is named to be responsible for picking up in the block area and asked to choose two friends to help him, cooperation is more likely. This can be added to the helper chart: a name for each interest center, with rotating responsibility. This may reduce the bickering over who was responsible for creating what mess. The big idea teachers are trying to emphasize with children is general participation in the environment shared by this community.
- for younger children, cleanup as play may be effective. Toddlers given tote bags or buckets made from gallon milk jugs can fill them with small toys, and dump them in the larger storage container offered by the teacher. Toddlers also enjoy using wagons or large trucks to collect materials.
- offer choices. Cleanup is not a choice, as the concept of responsible contribution is an important idea. However, other choices could include working alone or with friends; carrying the blocks 2 at a time or in a dump truck.
- take the playful approach. A very effective teacher, for example, challenges her four year olds to see if they can get the room picked up before their favorite tape is finished playing.
- reinforce positive behavior with attention. A good job should be noticed. Progress toward becoming a willing helper should be praised. Remember these children are learning new skills. Perfection is not the goal, but a positive, pleasant environment is.

- enlist the support parents in encouraging their children to also be responsible for picking up their toys at home. **Look at** Parent Handout #2 I can do it! And **discuss** how it could be used.

Go back to comments made on chart paper about cleanup time—have you handled all issues?

Mealtime/Snacks

Mealtimes are much more pleasant social occasions where there is a relaxed atmosphere. When children participate in the preparation and clearing of tables, teachers are free for pleasant interaction and supporting developing self-help skills and table behavior. Look at the indicators of Mealtime in ECERS-R Item #10, especially under 7. Some ideas to support children's participation include:

- make table setting and clearing responsibilities into part of the daily tasks identified on the helper chart. This participation in mealtime routines is noted as an indicator of excellence in 7.1. Several children can participate each day: the plate person, the napkin person, the cup person, the fork person, the spoon person, the trash person, the sponge person.
- make laminated placemats that have outlines for placement of utensils and dishes to make this a real social learning about appropriate table setting—a lot of math is embedded in this experience as well. Easily accessible materials allow children to work independently on table setting and cleaning up.
- many teachers plan specific placement of children at the table, identifiable by the name and/or picture on the placemat. For orderly transitions, this has the advantage of children knowing exactly where to go and sit. (For other teacher goals, this may also have the advantage of encouraging interaction among particular children, providing good mealtime models for others, and of providing literacy experiences for the table setters, who learn to identify other children's names.)

Discuss any other issues about mealtimes that are raised.

Bathroom Routines

Teachers and children in classrooms for young children spend a good deal of time managing transitions that involve using the bathroom. **Look at Item 12** in ECERS-R for guidelines. In order for these transitions to go smoothly, teachers use ideas that include:

- provisions to make the sink, toilet, and diapering area easily accessible for children's independent use. Items added such as stools and step arrangements, low mirrors, low paper towel dispensers.
- cues to help children move through the routines in a timely way. For example, picture charts that show steps in hand washing and drying, and tooth brushing. Egg timers or kitchen timers, or music cues may be used to help children complete their tasks and move out of the way for others. Some teachers time how long it takes to sing a verse of a familiar song, so they know when children have completed the required time for effective hand washing.

- while children are waiting for their turn in the bathroom, they can be occupied with books or other quiet activities. Before and after lunch, for example, children may select books from the shelves or take a “quiet box” to work with. “Quiet boxes” may be created by using empty wipes containers or detergent boxes with handles, and filling them with a variety of small manipulatives and other interesting objects. You may have prepared several of these for **demonstration**. Suggestions (**first elicit ideas from group**):
 - a handful of bristle blocks
 - some greeting cards to match
 - a handful of pipe cleaners
 - a collection of large nuts and bolts
 - strings and beads
 - small etch-a-sketch pads
 - a magnet with metal and nonmetal objects
 - a small flashlight
 - a deck of cards
 - a tape measure
 - a small photo album with pictures of class events
 - a handful of plastic dinosaurs or farm animals
 - *magnetic letters or numbers
 - odd felt shapes with a “felt board” inside the box lid
 - anything else you can think of
 - an available adult to supervise and assist in the bathroom, as well as converse with children who are waiting for their turn.
-

Discuss any bathroom transition issues that arise.

Naptime

If teachers have planned the previous transitions of mealtime and bathroom time to run smoothly, the environment is already assisting in the transition to naptime. Here the goal is to create as peaceful an atmosphere as possible. **Look at** ECERS-R Item #11 to consider the indicators of excellence. Suggestions for supporting smooth transitions to naptime include:

- predictable environmental cues. The darkened room, the same quiet music playing on the tape player, the same sequence of activities leading up to naptime, the same preparation of the cot or sleeping mat with a familiar stuffed animal or blanket—all of these create the expectation for rest.
- quiet activities are available for children both before they sleep and after they waken, to allow children to meet their own pace and needs for sleeping.

Discuss any other concerns teachers may raise about the naptime transitions.

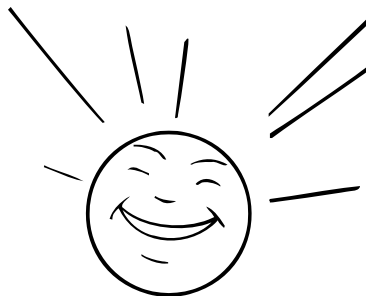
Wrap-up

- a. **Ask** participants to reflect on the material discussed in today's session. Ask them to decide on one thing they will try differently, on a consistent basis, between now and the next sessions, and to write it down, and then describe it to someone sitting close to them. (If they are stuck, remind them of some of the ideas discussed, such as handouts for parents, beginning rituals, table setting participation, "Quiet boxes") Tell them to come prepared to describe/show the results at the next meeting.
- b. **Assign** them each to record the events of one transition in their classroom, all the steps, who did what and where they were, any songs or cues or other strategies used, and bring the page of complete description to the next meeting.

GOOD MORNINGS

We know you are eager to get your child's day off to a good start. There are certain specific things that have been shown to help young children make a smooth transition into the classroom each day. We hope this helps you have good mornings!

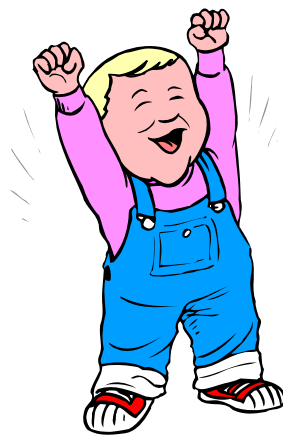
- Give yourselves enough time in the morning. Young children often get anxious when they are rushed, and also react to your feelings of stress. Setting the alarm clock to give you an extra 10 minutes may help.
- Have pleasant conversation in the car about some of the things your child enjoys doing at preschool.
- Remind your child of the predictability of your pick-up arrangements and plans for after-school.
- Establish a pattern of what you will each do when you enter the classroom each day. Greet the teachers, so that your child can see that you are comfortable with them. If you can stay for 3 or 4 minutes, this can help your child find something to focus interest on.
- Encourage your child to do as much independently as possible during the arrival process. For example, walking into the classroom herself; putting her own bag in her cubby in, or whatever classroom ritual the teacher has established.
- After you have said you will go, make your goodbyes prompt, affectionate, and positive. This is not the time for discussions of behavior or yesterday's mistakes. Such beginnings will help your child have a good day.



I CAN DO IT!

One of our goals in the classroom is to help our children become responsible for some of the cleanup and personal care routines of daily life. We believe that this is important, for young children to become increasingly capable, to see themselves as making a contribution to their families and classroom. Responsibility develops very early in life. Although sometimes it seems faster and easier to simply do it ourselves, we remember how much children benefit by being encouraged and helped to participate. Here are some things you can do at home to support independence and responsibility.

- Find containers for your child to pick up his toys each night. Give assistance, but let the main responsibility be his.
- Make accessible personal care items: washcloth and towel, toothbrush, hairbrush.
- Organize clothing so child can find and put on his own underwear, clothing, socks and shoes, etc.
- Find simple household chores that your child can participate in; for example, putting napkins and flatware on the table, emptying wastebaskets, picking up newspapers.
- Allow your child to participate in care of animals or younger children. For example, help fill the dog's bowl, bring a diaper for the baby's change.
- Show your appreciation for the help and your child's developing skill.
- Remember that when children complete tasks, it may take them more time, and the job may not be as perfect as when you do it. Nevertheless, the learning involved is very important, and worth the time.



SESSION IV: Practice in Transitions

Materials needed

Pages from participants describing a transition in their classroom
Copies of scenarios to analyze
Chart pages and markers for last activity

Concepts to emphasize in this session

- Using principles of transitions allows teachers to analyze and improve transitions
- Changing teacher behaviors may result in desired changes for children's behaviors.

Beginning activity

Ask participants to find a partner and share with them one experience they've had regarding transitions since the last session. After sufficient time for each to share, ask everyone who has heard a story that the whole group should hear. Hopefully you will hear some positive stories.

Small group work

Assign several participants to a small group, giving each one a different scenario. (All scenarios can be printed on the same sheets, assigning number 1 to one group, number 2 to another, etc. **Ask** the groups to follow the directions on their scenario, and use the principles to improve the transitions. **Remind** them they can use the handout with the ten principles they received in the second session to stimulate their thinking.

Then each group can share their thinking with the larger group, who can act as reminders of anything they have forgotten.

1. *Analyze real life situations in pairs.*

Ask partners to exchange the record of the transition in their own classroom that they brought with them. Each will read the others, and then will use the 10 principles to analyze how the transition has used these—or not. Pairs can then discuss findings with each other.

2. *Challenge and Celebrate*

Distribute individual sheets of chart paper and markers to participants. Ask them to create a slogan or image that illustrates one change /improvement they are making in transitions in their classroom. **Post** these around the room, and do a “gallery crawl” so everyone can appreciate everyone’s work. Some of these are already things to celebrate, and others are challenges still working on. Remind them they can post “*Ten Principles for Good Transitions*” on their closet doors to remind them of what they want to continue working on in transitions.

PRACTICE EXERCISE #1

Imagine that you are a provider who works alone with a group of five children ages 2 through 5. Your most difficult transition period is when outdoor playtime ends and the children all come inside and take off their coats. The routines that must follow are: getting toileted and hands washed for lunch; getting the table set; cooking and serving the food; settling children down for lunch.

Using the principles of smooth transitions, plan the way this transition could work for you and your children. Write it down step by step.

How would you:

- give them advance warning?
- use cues to let them know what to be doing?
- give specific instructions, one at a time?
- avoid empty waiting time?
- give children responsibilities?
- incorporate elements of playful imagination?

PRACTICE EXERCISE #2

Imagine that you are one of two teachers who work with a group of twelve 2-year-olds. The most trying time of the day for you is when it is time to put away the toys the children have been using during their indoor play time, get them to the bathroom and change diapers, wash hands and seat them at the table for mid-morning snack. How do you and your co-worker decide to use the principles to make this time run more smoothly?

Proceed in your planning by asking yourself all the questions in Practice Exercise #1, as well as considering where each of the adults is during this period, and what are their responsibilities. Check yourself again with the principles—did you use them all effectively?

PRACTICE EXERCISE #3

Imagine you are one of two teachers in a preschool classroom that includes 16 three- and four-year-olds. The children have been in group time with you, enjoying a book about Curious George. The next activity is to move to free choice time indoors, where choices will include using play dough at the table, easel painting, and a cooking project.

Proceed to plan this transition using the same questions from the above practice exercises.

PRACTICE EXERCISE #4

Consider the classroom of Mary Fox. Mary just finished circle time, and said: "Now it's time to go outdoors." Seven children dashed for the door, with two bumping in to each other, and yelling, "I was here first." Mary had to raise her voice to be heard over the yelling, and she called all the children to come back and use the bathroom. Two of them were arguing about leaving their place in line, and the whole room felt upset, including Mary, who wondered what she could have done differently. What *could* she have done to create a smoother transition?