Strengthening Professional Practices

of Infant & Toddler Care Teachers

Field Guide

South Carolina's Infant & Toddler

Strengthening Professional Practices of Infant & Toddler Care Teachers

A Companion to the Infant & Toddler Guidelines
When you play with me,
I learn new words and ideas.
It’s fun for both of us!

I am driven to move, it’s how I learn and develop. Give me time, materials and safe space and watch me grow.

Care for me in ways that I find soothing.

When you play with me, I learn new words and ideas. It’s fun for both of us!
Purpose Statement

Why a Field Guide for Infant & Toddler Care Teachers?

The Field Guide was created for the special individuals who spend their days nurturing and supporting the hearts, minds and bodies of our youngest citizens. It is designed for you, the infant and toddler care teacher! Your work is emotionally and physically challenging yet it is also exhilarating and rewarding.

The hope is that the Field Guide will deepen your understanding of infant and toddler development, provide you with ideas to strengthen your care teaching practices and encourage you to seek out and try new approaches. The research is clear – early experiences last a lifetime – and you, the care teacher, influence the long-term impact of these experiences. In other words, the everyday experiences young children have while in your care contribute to who they will become.

Access Materials Online:
www.scpitc.org
**What is the Field Guide?**

Our desire was to develop a resource that infant and toddler care teachers could use to address real-life challenges by suggesting care teaching practices for them to try. The Field Guide does just that.

The Field Guide presents vignettes that capture a moment in time in an infant, mobile infant and toddler program based on real-life child care challenges. The vignettes enable you to “see” and “hear” children and care teachers during play, learning and caregiving routines and the interactions involved. After reading a vignette, the reader walks through a series of questions and essential care teaching practices. These practices are then woven into a final Putting It All Together vignette depicting a more developmentally appropriate child-teacher encounter.

The Field Guide is not an answer book with quick fixes to common child care challenges. Instead, it provides a framework to help examine issues that you may find challenging and it explores possible solutions through reflective questioning and practices. This approach of reflective practice promotes using observation, questioning and planning as tools that teachers use to inform their interactions and responses to young children.

Remember, there is no one single, “right” way to care for an infant, and there is no one “right” answer to many questions asked by infant and toddler teachers. When asked how to handle common child care challenges, many experts will initially respond by saying, “It depends.” We agree and the Field Guide will help guide you in making decisions regarding your professional practices.

**Why a Companion Document to South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines?**

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines provide definitions and examples of infant and toddler development in six developmental domains from birth to 36 months. Understanding the stages of development throughout the six domains is important to providing responsive, respectful and reciprocal care, creating an appropriate environment, and having realistic expectations. It is a necessary foundation for observation, assessment, planning and intentional care teaching.

The Infant & Toddler Guidelines, along with the Field Guide, assists teachers in making the connection between children’s development and professional practice.

**The Path to Creating the Field Guide**

In February of 2010, professionals came together from two states, South Carolina and Ohio, along with Peter Mangione (WestEd) and Kay Albrecht (Innovations in Early Childhood Education, Inc.), to begin a collaboration to create a field guide for care teachers that would offer strategies and possible solutions to everyday type situations that occur in infant and toddler programs.

The Field Guide was widely reviewed during various stages of development by representatives in both states and at several national conferences. South Carolina and Ohio also held focus groups during the development phase to collect feedback which was overwhelmingly positive. The focus groups’ suggestions for strengthening the Field Guide helped make the document the wonderful resource it is today. This document represents a shared vision with a common goal: to create a tool that is relevant, realistic and empowering for care teachers in the diverse settings where they care for infants and toddlers. As with the Infant & Toddler Guidelines, the Field Guide is influenced by the philosophy of WestEd’s Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC).

**Guiding Principles**

The professional practices identified in the Field Guide must...

- Promote research-based best practices
- Respect the individual differences of children and their families
- Be sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences
- Be inclusive of children with disabilities and other special needs
- Endorse care teaching practices that are both ethical and professional
- Reflect everyday experiences of care teachers
- Be rooted in the philosophical belief that children’s optimal development is nested in relationships that are respectful and responsive
- Include all domains comprehensive of development that are best supported during individualized routines and in play
Use of the Field Guide
There is no “right” way to use the Field Guide; the best approach is the one that works for you. Though to get the most out of the Field Guide, it is important to understand the vignette layout and its step by step process as shown in the diagrams on pages Intro 4-7.

The diagrams will guide you through each vignette’s three primary sections:

- Watch
- Ask Yourself/Give It a Try
- Putting It All Together

Please note, any similarities in the names of teachers, children or families portrayed in the vignettes are coincidental. They are fictional and are for illustrative purposes only.

Field Guide Vignettes
On pages Intro 14-15 are lists of common child care situations, or topics, covered in the Field Guide. Each topic is presented as a vignette, a moment in time in an infant and toddler program. The vignette titles capture what care teachers may “say” or “ask” about specific topics. It is important that you read all sections of the vignette in order to understand how the vignette topic plays out in the scenario and to see how the recommended professional practices are implemented.

The vignettes are divided into three age groups:

- Infant (Birth to 8 months)
- Mobile Infant (6 to 18 months)
- Toddler (16 to 36 months)

Notice that the age ranges overlap to reflect the impact of individual differences on the rate of development.

Some Vignette Topics Are Not Available for Certain Age Groups
While several of the topics are presented in each of the three age groups, there are a few topics that are not. Some topics are not suitable for the age group represented due either to the developmental stages of children or the appropriateness of the experience. For example, there are no vignettes on “Getting Them Ready for Preschool” for the infant and mobile infant age groups since directed school readiness activities are inappropriate for this age group.

Use of Screen Time with Infants & Toddlers (TV/DVD/Video/Computer)
Hands-on opportunities in appropriate and interesting indoor and outdoor environments require children to use their sense of smell, touch, sight, hearing, and sometimes taste. These opportunities also involve the use of motor, cognitive, and emotional skills and often language and social skills, which are not utilized in passive screen time activities.

For this reason, and following the national recommendations and the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the use of TVs/DVDs/videos/computers is not appropriate for children under the age of 24 months in any circumstance. It is best practice, and the Field Guide’s recommendation, not to use any screen time experiences with children under the age of 36 months.

For children’s experiences to be developmentally appropriate, what must be taken into account is: knowledge of how children develop and learn; knowledge of the strengths, needs and interests of children; and knowledge of the social and cultural context in which children live and grow. Use of media does not meet these criteria and does not support children’s learning through exploration.
Each vignette is laid out similarly. Understanding each section will help you get the most out of the Field Guide.

What You’ll Find on Page 1 of Each Vignette

**Watch**

“Watch,” the initial vignette, sets up an example of a real-life situation that a care teacher may experience. The care teacher’s professional practices illustrated in the “Watch” vignette are not “wrong” but rather are practices that could be strengthened.

**Child’s Quote**

The child’s quote on the “Watch” page is “Out of the Mouth of Babes.” The child is telling the reader what her needs are based on the ideas portrayed in the vignette. The development team titled this piece “One Thing Right Now”; the one thing we would like the reader to consider right now.

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So Aggressive...With Others

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him, then he is off again.

Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole’s baby doll. Then she reaches to take the bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ‘Nita, my bottle,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita before pedaling off again. Ms. Alix repeats herself, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at her, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

When she catches up with Keeton, Ms. Alix kneels in front of the trike and stops him. She takes his hand, gently pulls him off of the trike, and walks him to the cozy area. “I told you to go to the cozy area. Sit here until you can listen to my words.” She sits him down and hands him a book. Keeton throws the book on the floor and kicks it with his foot. Ms. Alix takes him by the hand and says, “Keeton, you are hurting your friends and destroying the books. You’ll have to stay with me until you can listen to my words and do what you are supposed to do.” For the rest of play time, Ms. Alix holds Keeton’s hand and takes him with her as she goes about her duties.

Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.

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Age Group: Toddler

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him, then he is off again.

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Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.
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**Impulse control is an essential part of a child’s developing emotion regulation and self-regulation. It starts developing in infancy and continues throughout the preschool years. A child in the process of learning impulse control can be challenging for an adult. A young toddler may only occasionally comply with a teacher’s expectations. An older toddler is likely to express understanding of some boundaries, but may not yet have developed enough self-control to attend to them consistently. Being patient with the learning process is key. With appropriate supervision, guidance, and support from responsive care teachers, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.**

**Watch**

The “Watch” vignette is presented again so readers can drill down, “observe” and focus on what the child is experiencing. Revisiting the “scene” helps readers more clearly identify and clarify what is happening in the vignette. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the connection between interactions, environment, development and behaviors. The “Watch” vignette directly links to the next section found on page 3 of each vignette, “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try.”

**More About...**

The “More About” paragraph expands on the vignette’s content or a closely related topic. The “More About” provides additional insights and points to ponder. See pages Intro 16-17 for a complete listing of “More About” topics.
The bullet point icons identify the “Give It a Try” professional practices that refer to teacher interaction (▲), environment & materials (●), child development & interest (★) and caregiving routine (♦).

**Ask Yourself**

The “Ask Yourself” questions, written in the reader’s voice, align to specific paragraphs in the “Watch” vignette. This enables you to consider questions that directly relate to child behaviors and professional practices. This approach of reviewing a scenario and asking questions is part of the reflective process.

**Give It a Try**

“Give It a Try” presents possibilities to strengthen your professional practices, increase your knowledge and to reflect on your ideas and beliefs. Be open to trying new ideas and seeing what works and what doesn’t. The suggested professional practices are options and do not represent a complete list. They do, however, illustrate essential professional practices that support the provision of relationship-based care that is responsive, respectful and reciprocal.

The “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” strategy is based on The Program for Infant/Toddler Care’s Watch, Ask, and Adapt; a process that utilizes the skills of observation, reflection and application to support care teaching.
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details of vignette layout

What you'll find on page 4 of each vignette

• How different developmental domains do not operate separately, but instead are inextricably woven together and are part of every care teaching decision you make.

Putting It All Together

The “Putting It All Together” vignette is an expansion of the original “Watch” vignette and shows how the scenario might be different when the practices recommended in the “Ask Yourself” and “Give It a Try” are carried out. Of course, there is not one solution and there are many factors to take into consideration. What we do know is that knowledgeable, responsive, respectful and reciprocal care leads to meaningful, early experiences that last a lifetime.

Infant & Toddler Guidelines Connections

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines provide definitions and examples of infant and toddler development in six developmental domains from birth to 36 months. Each of the six developmental domains is represented with an icon that relates to the type of development described in the domain.

The Guidelines’ icons, in the “Putting It All Together” section, connect a child’s behavior/interaction with some of the six developmental domains and the Guidelines’ indicator it represents. Though only one to three of the Guidelines’ icons are aligned with a behavior in the “Putting It All Together” vignette, more developmental behaviors and connections can be identified throughout.

The Guidelines’ Icons in the Vignette Highlight:

• How children’s experiences directly relate to their development.
• How experiences can be intentional and unintentional and still affect development.
• How teachers should take advantage of opportunities and everyday encounters to support children’s development; it isn’t something extra teachers must do.
• How different developmental domains do not operate separately, but instead are inextricably woven together and are part of every care teaching decision you make.


guidelines connections

- physical health
- emotional development
- social development
- motor development
- language & communication development
- cognitive development


Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls while Eliza, 24 months, is reading in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the trike area. He rides out of the active play area and sprints by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. He turns, riding into the cozy area where Eliza squeals as the trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton stops the book she is reading out of her hand. Startled by his response, Eliza scoots to the far corner of the cozy area.

Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up and sees Keeton run into Eliza’s leg. Eliza tells Ms. Alix who is comforting her, that Keeton hurt her leg with the trike. Ms. Alix responds, “I’m sorry Keeton hurt you. Let me look at your leg.” She notices that Keeton is ready to make another loop. She stops him, calmly saying, “Keeton, please get off the trike and come with me.” She leads Keeton over to the cozy area and says, “You hurt Eliza with your trike. I don’t allow trikes in the cozy area. Eliza, let Keeton, you hurt me, no trikes here.” Ms. Alix asks Keeton to pick up the book and return it to Eliza. Eliza takes it and sits down to read.

Meanwhile, Juanita grabs Cole’s baby doll and tries to take the baby bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ‘Nita, my bottle.” and holds on tightly, almost bumping into Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. He turns, riding into the cozy area where Eliza squeals as the trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton stops the book she is reading out of her hand. Startled by his response, Eliza scoots to the far corner of the cozy area.

Ms. Alix holds out her hands saying, “Let me hold the doll and bottle while we figure out what to do.” The children, familiar with Ms. Alix’s problem solving strategy, hand them over. She asks what the problem is and listens to both children’s descriptions. She restates what she heard. “Juanita grabbed Cole’s baby doll and wanted his baby bottle. Is that right?” Both children nod. Ms. Alix says, “How can we solve this problem?” Cole says,” My doll.” Juanita says, “My doll.” Ms. Alix points to the doll bed and says, “Look, Juanita, there are more dolls.” Ms. Alix says to Cole, “Here is your doll and bottle,” and then hands another doll and bottle to Juanita saying, “This is your baby doll.”

Keeton zooms by. Ms. Alix gently stops him and takes him to the trike area. She points to the floor where two strips of red tape define the trike area. “You can ride your trike anywhere between the red taped lines. When you ride your trike outside of the red tape, children get hurt. I won’t allow that to happen. If you can’t keep your trike inside the lines, I’ll put it away and help you find another place to play.” Keeton looks at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him. He nods and rides off staying inside the red lines. When he rides by her she comments, “Your trike is inside the red tape. Thanks for listening.” Keeton beams at her and continues to ride inside the trike area. Ms. Alix stays close to make sure he is able to control the urge to ride outside of the trike area.

Juanita says, “This is your baby doll.”

Keeton, ‘You hurt me; no bikes here.” Ms. Alix asks Keeton to pick up the book and return it to Eliza. Eliza takes it and sits down to read.

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Acknowledgments

The Development Team

The Field Guide is reflective of the individual talents and collective wisdom of the following professionals. To all of you, we owe a big “Thank you!”

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For providing vignette topics and content ideas which this document is founded on. Without your experience and participation, this document would not be what it is today.

South Carolina’s and Ohio’s Leadership Teams
For the vision to collaborate and the willingness and efforts to make it happen.

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Ohio’s and South Carolina’s focus groups were comprised of care teachers from center-based and family child care programs, educational coordinators, and program administrators. Your input and feedback on the structure and content were extremely valuable and a great asset in the development of the Field Guide. The focus group members were:

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Attachment
The affection and connectedness that develops between a child and a parent or between a child and a significant care teacher that builds a sense of trust and security within the child and profoundly affects all areas of development.

Caregiving Routines
Care procedures, such as diapering, dressing, feeding and eating, nap time preparation, and administering medication, that are adapted to each individual child’s needs. Personalized care is carried out by a care teacher who has developed a close relationship with a child and takes into account the child’s individual traits, temperament, family practices, and culture.

Child-Size
An environment and furnishings that fit individual children’s sizes so they feel secure, comfortable, and in some instances, independent.

Cognitive Development
Emerging thinking and perceptual skills, knowledge of concepts, problem-solving ability, and other aspects of processing and understanding information.

Developmental Domains

Developmentally Appropriate
Programs, experiences, opportunities and environments that are designed on the basis of: knowledge of how children develop and learn; knowledge of the strengths, needs and interests of children; and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live and grow.

Emerging Development & Skills
A child’s new behavior or abilities that are coming into existence.

Emotional Development
Emerging ability to become secure, express feelings, develop self-awareness and self-regulate.

Environment
All of the physical surroundings and social and cultural conditions that physically and emotionally affect children and their ability to learn, grow, develop and survive.

Family
A social unit of two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments, and often but not always, live in the same household. A family may include children and adults living in the home, adults who are responsible for the long-term care and well-being of the child, a child’s legal guardian, and parents who may not live in the same household as the child.

Infant & Toddler Care Teacher
(see Primary Care Teacher)
An early childhood professional with the education, training and experience to support the learning, development, and nurturance of children birth to 36 months of age.

Language & Communication Development
Increasing ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally with others to build relationships, share meaning and express needs and interests.

Manipulatives
Learning materials and toys that support a child’s use of small muscle/fine motor skills. Examples of manipulatives are rattles, grasping toys, nesting cups, stacking rings, puzzles, pegs/pegboards, pop beads, shape sorters, and lacing beads.

Motor Development
Ability to use one’s body to interact with the environment; includes small muscle, large muscle, balance, and oral motor.

Ohio’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines
A document that defines the six developmental domains and guidelines of development and lists examples of behaviors for infants and toddlers birth to 36 months of age. The six domains are: Physical Health, Emotional, Social, Motor, Language and Communication, and Cognitive Development.

Physical Health Domain
Safe health practices and nutrition combined with nurturing and responsive caregiving. Protecting children from illness and injury, as well as providing them with individually appropriate nutrition and a sanitary environment that reduces the risk of infectious disease, is important for all caregivers.
Primary Care Teacher
(see Infant & Toddler Care Teacher)
An early childhood professional with the education, training and experience to support the learning, development, and nurturance of children birth to 36 months of age. Primary care teachers have principal responsibility for providing and coordinating the care (including safety, health, development, learning and emotional well-being) of specific or assigned infants and toddlers. Primary care teaching involves building a partnership with the children’s families. Primary care teaching is not exclusive care and works best when care teachers support each other in a team.

Professional Practices
Decisions and actions based on knowledge of early childhood theories, research, and caregiving strategies and techniques that shape the learning environment, routines, and interactions in child care centers and family child care programs.

Responsive, Respectful and Reciprocal Care Teaching
Care teachers read the “signs” or cues that infants and toddlers give to communicate their needs and interests and then act in a way that meets the child’s immediate needs or matches the child’s interest.

Reflective Practice
Thoughtfully and regularly questioning, assessing and evaluating the development, play and learning of children and methods of care and teaching, and then making informed changes to improve care and teaching. Reflective practice depends on a foundation of trust, time and space for care teachers to engage in introspection, both individually and as a team.

Self-Regulation
Emerging ability to manage powerful emotions, control behavior, maintain focus and attention, and manage bodily functions.

Social Development
Child’s emerging development of an understanding of self and others, and the ability to relate to other people and the environment.

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines
A document that defines the six developmental domains and guidelines of development and lists examples of behaviors for infants and toddlers birth to 36 months of age. The six domains are: Physical Health, Emotional, Social, Motor, Language and Communication, and Cognitive Development.

Temperament
The traits that represent a child’s inborn tendencies to respond to different stimulation. Temperament begins to appear within the first few months of life. It includes the way people show feelings and respond to the social and physical environment as well as influences how they adapt to life’s experiences.

Transition
The shift from one activity or routine to another, or a child moving from one learning environment to another, such as home to child care and then child care to home. Effective transitions require an intentional, systematic process to help a child move, emotionally and physically, from one place or activity to another. Transition strategies are used when a child enters and moves within a program to help the child, family and care teachers learn about each other and the best ways to meet the child’s needs. These strategies contribute to building a respectful relationship between the family and the program.

Vignette
A brief scene, sketch, scenario, or story.


• National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): Web-based collection of resources and information on developmentally appropriate practice, early childhood news, publications and resources for professionals. www.naeyc.org

• National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC): Web-based collection of resources and information pertaining to The National Association for Family Child Care. www.nafcc.org

• Ohio’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines http://www.ocrra.org


• South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines www scpitc.org

• Zero to Three: a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. www.zerotothree.org
References


- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): Web-based collection of resources and information on developmentally appropriate practice, early childhood news, publications and resources for professionals. www.naeyc.org

- Ohio Professional Development Network. Ohio’s early childhood core knowledge & competencies. (2007). Columbus, OH.

- Ohio Professional Development Network. Ohio’s guiding young children’s behavior by supporting social and emotional development; a core knowledge early childhood field guide. (2010). Columbus, OH.


### Vignette Table of Contents

In each vignette you can “see” and “hear” infants, mobile infants, toddlers and their care teachers in action. Choose a vignette topic and turn to the page in either the infant, mobile infant or toddler section that you want to explore.

**Note:** The vignette titles capture what care teachers commonly “say” or “ask” about specific topics. It is important to note that the titles may not be stating what teachers should do. You will need to read the vignette, questions and essential practices to understand how the title plays out in the vignette and what appropriate professional practices are implemented.

#### Age Group: Infant: Birth to 8 Months

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#### Age Group: Mobile Infant: 6 to 18 Months

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Some Vignette Topics Are Not Available for Certain Age Groups

While a majority of topics are presented in each of the three age groups, there are a few topics that are not. Some topics are not suitable for the age group represented, due either to the developmental stages of children or the appropriateness of the experience. For example, there are no vignettes on “Getting Them Ready for Preschool” for the infant and mobile infant age groups since directed school readiness activities are inappropriate for this age group.

Use of Screen Time (TV/DVD/Video/Computer)

Hands-on opportunities in appropriate environments require children to use their sense of smell, touch, sight, hearing, and sometimes taste. These opportunities also involve the use of motor, cognitive, and emotional skills and often language and social skills, which are not utilized in passive screen time activities.

For this reason and following the national recommendations and the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the use of TVs/DVDs/videos/computers is not appropriate for children under the age of 24 months in any circumstance. It is best practice, and the Field Guide’s recommendation, not to use any screen time experiences with children under the age of 36 months.
The “More About” paragraph on page 2 of each vignette expands on the vignette’s content or a closely related topic. The “More About” provides additional insights and points to ponder. Several “More Abouts” have the same title and content and appear in multiple vignettes across the three age groups. Other “More Abouts” are only included in one age group.

Choose a “More About” topic and turn to the page in the section that you want to explore.

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## “More About” Listing

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<td>More About...Impulse Control</td>
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<td>More About...Toddlers and Mouthing</td>
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<td>More About...Learning on the Go</td>
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<td>More About...Talking with Families About Biting</td>
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<td>More About...Family Dining</td>
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"One Thing Right Now"

The “One Thing Right Now” child’s quote is telling the reader what the child's needs are based on the main idea portrayed in the vignette. The development team titled this piece as "One Thing Right Now"; the one thing we would like the reader to consider right now.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group: Infant: Birth to 8 Months</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need everyone who cares for me to slow down and be patient with me as I start my day. Pg. I–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm exploring – not trying to hurt my friends. Separating me from them doesn’t help. It makes me sad and fussy. Pg. I–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing outside gives me important sensory experiences that are different from playing inside. Pg. I–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even when you are caring for others, I still need to know that you are caring for me. Pg. I–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am learning about the world around me when I mouth objects. Please be sure these items are safe for me. Pg. I–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like having a relationship with one primary care teacher who really knows my needs. Pg. I–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for me in ways that are especially soothing for me. Pg. I–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this age I mouth everything, including my friends, so keep your eyes on me. Pg. I–35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing my schedule helps, but using this information to adjust to meet my needs is what is important. Pg. I–55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will react when I hear my friends cry. It is part of my social development. Pg. I–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family will be upset to hear I was bitten because they love me. Pg. I–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn on the go! Pg. I–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need materials all day long that are ready for me to explore. Pg. I–43</td>
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**Age Group:** Mobile Infant: 6 to 18 Months

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<tr>
<td>I need everyone who cares for me to slow down and be patient with me as I warm up.</td>
<td>M–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this age, I have few words and little impulse control so I need your guidance.</td>
<td>M–35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t be surprised if it looks like a ball and moves like a ball, that I think it is a ball.</td>
<td>M–63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some days it’s harder to move from one thing to the next. I need extra time to get ready.</td>
<td>M–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t intend to be aggressive, even if some of my actions seem like it.</td>
<td>M–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being sensitive and responsive to my feelings is the first step in helping me not to bite.</td>
<td>M–67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am attached to you so letting me know about your comings and goings is helpful.</td>
<td>M–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am too young to know what can and cannot be mouched. Give me safe and appropriate things to mouth and explore.</td>
<td>M–43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family shows concern because they want the best care for me.</td>
<td>M–71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being prepared helps all of us, including you.</td>
<td>M–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It may not look like I’m learning, but I am.</td>
<td>M–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in doing things I choose and I learn while I’m doing them. Circle time is not right for me.</td>
<td>M–75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to explore everything in my path, so make it safe and interesting for me.</td>
<td>M–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this age it doesn’t take much for me to fall apart if my needs aren’t being met.</td>
<td>M–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not always tired at the same time as my friends. Consider what I need, please.</td>
<td>M–79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come learn with me.</td>
<td>M–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am driven to move, it’s how I learn and develop. Give me time, materials and safe space and watch me grow!</td>
<td>M–55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create play experiences that allow me to experience success.</td>
<td>M–83</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learn by looking and touching.</td>
<td>M–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being ready for my every move will help you guide my behavior.</td>
<td>M–59</td>
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</table>
Supporting my curiosity supports my learning. [Pg. M–87]

It’s beneficial when you respect both my individual schedule and my need to play outside. [Pg. M–95]

A secure attachment means I have someone special to care for me. [Pg. M–103]

Letting me choose and explore things when I am interested in them is how I learn best. [Pg. M–91]

Creating experiences for me that are both appropriate and interesting takes thoughtful planning. [Pg. M–99]

My body tells me when it is time to sleep and eat. Your respectful care meets my needs. [Pg. M–107]
I need everyone who cares for me to make a plan and work together to make saying goodbye easier.

Knowing why I am sad will help you know how to care for me.

If I am upset, it is for a reason. I need your comfort even if you don’t know why I’m crying.

It’s OK to change our schedule once in awhile, but I like my routine care to stay the same and be predictable.

Sometimes you help me find acceptable choices that interest me.

I’d rather learn with you than roam on my own.

Make my environment ready for me to touch and freely explore so I can learn from it.

Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.

I will create my own “fun” so talk and play with me to help me stay engaged in play.

By playing with me, you are teaching me new words, ideas and how to use materials. Besides, it’s fun for both of us!

If I can easily see what I can play with, I learn more and may create less clutter.

I need your guidance so I can learn how to resolve disagreements.

I am driven to move, and move fast when I can. Arrange the room so I can be safe.

I can sometimes begin to follow directions when you keep my abilities in mind.

With your support and appropriate materials, I am learning to control my emotions.

I can’t protect myself from being bitten. I depend on you to keep me safe.

Treat my family with respect. Understand they are upset because they trusted you to take good care of me.

I like to make my own discoveries through experiences I choose. Group time is not right for me.

Making sure I get to rest and play when I need to helps me grow and learn.

I sure am active so offering me ways to move safely helps me explore to my heart’s delight.
I learn from playing with materials in all sorts of different ways.

I actively continue to learn when given the opportunity to explore my ideas.

No matter how old I am, I need my care individualized just for me.

I have to learn like a toddler before I can learn like a preschooler.

When I play outside, I have opportunities to learn new things I can’t experience inside.

Mealtime is more than feeding my hungry tummy. I like to relax, talk and learn.

I learn a lot of important information while playing. It prepares me to be a preschooler.

I learn more from art when I make my own choices.

You can learn so much more about me when you’re my primary care teacher.

I need you to show my family the progress I am making toward school readiness.
Create Your Own Vignette
This blank vignette template provides you with the opportunity to take your own real-life situation and walk through the “Watch,” “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try,” and “Putting It All Together” process. Follow the directions throughout the vignette template for guidance.

Age Group: 

Title of Vignette: 

Watch

Directions: Write your real-life situation from an observer’s point of view; what the observer would “see” and “hear.” Include the child’s behavior and actions, the teacher’s actions, and the interactions between teacher/child and peers; also include the environment and materials.

Directions: What is the “One Thing Right Now” a child would want the reader of this vignette to consider? Use the child’s own words.

“ ”
Create Your Own Vignette

**Watch**

**Directions:** The “Watch” vignette is written again so readers can more clearly identify and clarify what is happening in the vignette. The “Ask Yourself” questions you will write on page 3 of this vignette align to this “Watch.”

**more about...**

**Directions:** Use this space to tell the reader “More About” what you’ve learned.
Create Your Own Vignette

Take Another Look

Directions: Complete the 3 steps on this page to help you reflect on the situation by asking questions and creating possible solutions to help resolve it.

Ask Yourself

Step 1: What questions would you ask that directly relate to child behaviors, teaching strategies and the environment described in the “Watch” vignette? Include as many questions as you feel necessary.

Give It a Try

Step 2: List teaching strategies that address the “Ask Yourself” questions and the paragraphs you identified in the “Watch.” Include strategies that you are familiar with, strategies you’ve discussed with colleagues and professionals, and those learned through research. Use the “Library of Resources” in the Field Guide Introduction section to assist you in your research. Just because you list it doesn’t mean you have to try it, but be open to trying new ideas and seeing what works and what doesn’t.

Step 3: Re-read your “Give It a Try” teaching strategies and identify what “Key” your strategies relate to. Draw the bullet point icon next to its corresponding “Give It a Try” practice.

Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction
★ = Child Development & Interest
♭ = Environment & Materials
♦ = Caregiving Routine
**Putting It All Together:** Essential Practices in Action

**Directions:** There are two options for using “Putting It All Together.” Use one or both options.

1. Referring to the “Watch” vignette, rewrite how you imagine the issues in the “Watch” would be resolved using the “Give It a Try” teaching strategies.

2. After implementing the “Give It a Try” strategies in your program, use this “Putting It All Together” template to write down what you observed – just as you did in the “Watch” vignette. Remember, you may see some immediate changes in behavior, but you may also see changes over time. Additionally, you may not see the changes in behavior you were expecting. Do not give up, try other strategies. Children, like adults, need time to adjust to change.

**Connections to Infant & Toddler Guidelines**

**Directions:**
To show connections between infant and toddler development and children’s behavior: choose a child behavior from the vignette then align it to one of the six developmental domains.
“Come learn with us!”
How to Assemble Your Field Guide

1. Use a 2” white view binder.
2. Print out cover and place it inside the binder’s see-through plastic sleeve.
3. Cut out this spine and insert into your binder spine.
4. Three-hole punch all other pages on the left side and insert into your binder.
Welcome to South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide

Infant Birth to 8 Months

Get the Complete Field Guide Online – Including These ADDITIONAL Sections:

Introduction (Sets the stage for understanding and using the Field Guide)
- What is the Field Guide
- Using the Field Guide
- Details of Vignette Layout
- Acknowledgments

- Glossary
- Resources Library
- References
- Vignette Table of Contents
- “More About” Listing
- Out of the Mouths of Babes
- Create Your Own Vignette

Mobile Infant Vignettes (6 to 18 Months)

Toddler Vignettes (16 to 36 Months)

What’s Inside

These vignettes capture a moment in time in child care programs based on real-life challenges. The vignettes enable you to “see” and “hear” children and care teachers during play, learning, and caregiving routines and the interactions involved. After reading a vignette, the reader walks through a series of questions and possible teaching strategy solutions. These strategies are then woven into a final “Putting It All Together” vignette depicting a more developmentally appropriate child-teacher encounter.

- Vignette Table of Contents
- Details of Vignette Layout
- Infant Vignettes (Birth to 8 Months)

Create Your Own Vignette

Do you have a real-life situation that you would like to address? The “Create Your Own Vignette” Template provides you with the opportunity by taking you through the “Watch,” “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” and “Putting It All Together” process. You can create questions, strategies and possible resolutions by using the blank vignette template found in the Field Guide Introduction Section.

Visit www.scpitc.org to download any and all sections of the Infant & Toddler Field Guide.

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### Vignette Table of Contents

In each vignette you can “see” and “hear” infants and their care teachers in action. Choose a vignette topic and turn to the page in the Infant section that you want to explore.

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**Note:** The vignette titles capture what care teachers commonly “say” or “ask” about specific topics. It is important to note that the titles may not be stating what teachers should do. You will need to read the vignette, questions and essential practices to understand how the title plays out in the vignette and what appropriate professional practices are implemented.

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### Want to Explore the Mobile Infant and Toddler Vignettes?

Download these age sections at www.scpitc.org.

**Age Group:** Mobile Infant: 6 to 18 Months

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(Continued on next page)
Some Vignette Topics Are Not Available for Certain Age Groups

While a majority of topics are presented in each of the three age groups, there are a few topics that are not. Some topics are not suitable for the age group represented, due either to the developmental stages of children or the appropriateness of the experience. For example, there are no vignettes on “Getting Them Ready for Preschool” for the infant and mobile infant age groups since directed school readiness activities are inappropriate for this age group.

Use of Screen Time (TV/DVD/Video/Computer)

Hands-on opportunities in appropriate environments require children to use their sense of smell, touch, sight, hearing, and sometimes taste. These opportunities also involve the use of motor, cognitive, and emotional skills and often language and social skills, which are not utilized in passive screen time activities.

For this reason and following the national recommendations and the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the use of TVs/DVDs/videos/computers is not appropriate for children under the age of 24 months in any circumstance. It is best practice, and the Field Guide’s recommendation, not to use any screen time experiences with children under the age of 36 months.
Each vignette is laid out similarly. Understanding each section will help you get the most out of the Field Guide.

What You’ll Find on Page 1 of Each Vignette

Watch

“Watch,” the initial vignette, sets up an example of a real-life situation that a care teacher may experience. The care teacher’s professional practices illustrated in the “Watch” vignette are not “wrong” but rather are practices that could be strengthened.

Child’s Quote

The child’s quote on the “Watch” page is “Out of the Mouth of Babes.” The child is telling the reader what her needs are based on the ideas portrayed in the vignette. The development team titled this piece “One Thing Right Now”; the one thing we would like the reader to consider right now.

So Aggressive... With Others

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and collides with Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him; then he is off again.

Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole’s baby doll. Then she reaches to take the bottle away from him. He yells, “No, Nita, my bottle,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita before pedaling off again. Ms. Alix repeats herself, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at him, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

When she catches up with Keeton, Ms. Alix kneels in front of the trike and stops him. She takes his hand, gently pulls him off of the trike, and walks him to the cozy area. “I told you to go to the cozy area. Sit here until you can listen to my words.” When she sits him down and hands him a book. Keeton throws the book on the floor and kicks it with his foot. Ms. Alix takes him by the hand and says, “Keeton, you are hurting your friends and destroying the books. You’ll have to stay with me until you can listen to my words and do what you are supposed to do.” For the rest of play time, Ms. Alix holds Keeton’s hand and takes him with her as she goes about her duties.

Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.
Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him; then he is off again.

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Impulse control is an essential part of a child’s developing emotion regulation and self-regulation. It starts developing in infancy and continues throughout the preschool years. A child in the process of learning impulse control can be challenging for an adult. A young toddler may only occasionally comply with a teacher’s expectations. An older toddler is likely to express understanding of some boundaries, but may not yet have developed enough self-control to attend to them consistently. Being patient with the learning process is key. With appropriate supervision, guidance, and support from responsive care teachers, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.

**More About...**

The “More About” paragraph expands on the vignette’s content or a closely related topic. The “More About” provides additional insights and points to ponder. See pages Intro 16-17 for a complete listing of “More About” topics.
Put It All Together

Give It a Try Key:
The bullet point icons identify the “Give It a Try” professional practices that refer to teacher interaction (▲), environment & materials (●), child development & interest (★) and caregiving routine (◦).

Ask Yourself

The “Ask Yourself” questions, written in the reader’s voice, align to specific paragraphs in the “Watch” vignette. This enables you to consider questions that directly relate to child behaviors and professional practices. This approach of reviewing a scenario and asking questions is part of the reflective process.

Give It a Try

“Give It a Try” presents possibilities to strengthen your professional practices, increase your knowledge and to reflect on your ideas and beliefs. Be open to trying new ideas and seeing what works and what doesn’t. The suggested professional practices are options and do not represent a complete list. They do, however, illustrate essential professional practices that support the provision of relationship-based care that is responsive, respectful and reciprocal.

The “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” strategy is based on The Program for Infant/Toddler Care’s Watch, Ask, and Adapt; a process that utilizes the skills of observation, reflection and application to support care teaching.
Putting It All Together

The “Putting It All Together” vignette is an expansion of the original “Watch” vignette and shows how the scenario might be different when the practices recommended in the “Ask Yourself” and “Give It a Try” are carried out. Of course, there is not one solution and there are many factors to take into consideration. What we do know is that knowledgeable, responsive, respectful and reciprocal care leads to meaningful, early experiences that last a lifetime.

Infant & Toddler Guidelines Connections

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines provide definitions and examples of infant and toddler development in six developmental domains from birth to 36 months. Each of the six developmental domains is represented with an icon that relates to the type of development described in the domain.

The Guidelines’ icons, in the “Putting It All Together” section, connect a child’s behavior/interaction with some of the six developmental domains and the Guidelines’ indicator it represents. Though only one to three of the Guidelines’ icons are aligned with a behavior in the “Putting It All Together” vignette, more developmental behaviors and connections can be identified throughout.
Crying...Upon Arrival

Family child care teacher, Ms. Gabriella, is playing music and humming along as she goes about her morning routine with her babies. Two have already arrived. Linda, 4 months, is playing on the floor with a mobile and Henry, 8 months, is calming down for a nap in the cozy area.

When Marco, 3½ months, and his mother arrive, he is crying. His mom, Mrs. Ruiz, is frazzled because he cried during the drive and didn’t calm down when she got him out of the car.

Ms. Gabriella notices that both Mrs. Ruiz and Marco are upset and goes over to try to help. She says, “Hi,” to Mrs. Ruiz and then gets close to Marco’s face and says, “Hi,” in a cheery voice. Marco turns his head away and cries even louder. Still trying to help, she gets Marco out of his infant carrier. Marco arches his back and kicks his feet as she removes him. She takes him over to his crib and lays him down. He screams even louder.

“Why won’t he stop crying?” Mrs. Ruiz asks. Ms. Gabriella shrugs, not knowing what she can say that might help. Mrs. Ruiz says, “Please call me if he doesn’t quit,” and hurries out the door leaving Marco still crying and Ms. Gabriella wondering what Mrs. Ruiz expects her to do.

“I need everyone who cares for me to slow down and be patient with me as I start my day.”
Family child care teacher, Ms. Gabriella, is playing music and humming along as she goes about her morning routine with her babies. Two have already arrived. Linda, 4 months, is playing on the floor with a mobile and Henry, 8 months, is calming down for a nap in the cozy area.

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A child’s arrival routine is usually brief, though it is a very important routine of the day. This is when a child transitions from one caregiver to another and from one setting to another. Arrivals can also set the mood for the day for the child, parent and you. To start the day off on the right track for everyone, learn about the stages of separation. For instance, for younger infants separating from a parent usually goes more smoothly than for older infants. Learn each child’s individual differences. For example, how she prefers to be approached, held and her sensitivities to the environment. Acknowledge the natural, and sometimes very strong, protective urges parents have, especially if their child is very young, when they transition their child into your care. Your flexibility, patience, understanding and professionalism will go a long way in building trusting relationships with the families you serve.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What should I do when Marco and his mom first arrive?
• Should I try to help Marco first or communicate with his mother to understand what is going on?

Give It a Try
△ Observe Marco and his mother when they arrive to get an idea of how the morning is going before approaching him.
○ First, try to help Marco calm down by lowering the stimulation in the room. Turn the music off and turn down the lights.
△ Lower your voice level when you talk to him and his mother. Empathize with Mrs. Ruiz’s experiences during the transition. Comment on Marco’s crying and how hard the transition might be for both of them.
△ Plan and be prepared for the children’s arrival.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why does Marco turn away when I greet him? Why does he arch his back and resist getting out of his infant carrier?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that children’s body movements communicate what they are feeling. By turning away and arching his back, he is telling you he doesn’t want to engage in interaction yet.
△ Read his cues and be responsive to what his movements are telling you. Let Mrs. Ruiz remove Marco from the infant carrier or let Marco remain in the carrier while you converse with his mom, allowing him to warm up to the changes.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• What can I do to help Marco and his mother?
• What changes can be made so drop-off transitions are easier?

Give It a Try
△ Avoid over-stimulating Marco while he is in distress. Approach slowly, avoid sudden movements, talk softly, gently and describe to him what is occurring. Slow things down so as not to add to his distress and to give him time to prepare for the transition.
△ Recognize Mrs. Ruiz’s important role in helping Marco. Help her find a quiet place in the room. Encourage her to take a moment to be with Marco after he calms.
△ Validate and share Mrs. Ruiz’s concern about why Marco won’t stop crying. Offer to help her figure it out.
◆ Ask Mrs. Ruiz about morning routines and listen to her input about transition difficulty. Rather than telling Mrs. Ruiz what to do, let her talk about the transition experience and try to understand what made the transition so hard. Then explore with her possible ways to make it better.
◆ Encourage Mrs. Ruiz to use the same routine every day to make it predictable.
Family child care teacher, Ms. Gabriella, is playing music and humming along as she goes about the morning routine with her babies. She knows the sequence and typical timing of her children’s arrival and tries to be ready as children arrive to help them make the transition to the program. Two children have already arrived. Linda, 4 months, is playing on the floor with a mobile and Henry, 8 months, is calming down for a nap in the cozy area. To make the mornings go as smoothly as possible, she has made sure to give Linda a bottle and to get Henry settled into a place so he can relax and get ready to take a morning nap before her next child arrives.

When Marco, 3½ months, and his mother enter the room, he is crying. His mom, Mrs. Ruiz, is frazzled because he cried during the drive and didn’t calm down when she got him out of the car. Although crying in the car is a typical experience, not calming down when he gets out of the car isn’t.

Ms. Gabriella observes right away that both Mrs. Ruiz and Marco are upset and is responsive to the situation. She knows that Marco is highly sensitive to high levels of stimulation in the classroom. She turns off the music and lowers the lighting level by dimming some of the lights. Then she goes over to the arriving family and says, “Hi,” to Mrs. Ruiz and watches Marco for a minute before saying in almost a whisper, “Hi Marco, you are not very happy right now. That was a long time to be in your carrier. Let’s get you out so you can move your body.” She looks at Mrs. Ruiz and says, “Long morning?” empathetically. Mrs. Ruiz sighs and says, “Yes.” Knowing Marco needs time with his mom and to prepare for the transition, Ms. Gabriella tells Mrs. Ruiz that she will put away Marco’s things. She suggests that Mrs. Ruiz take Marco out of the carrier and go over to a quiet corner in the room where a comfy platform rocker sits. Mrs. Ruiz and Marco make themselves comfortable in the rocker. After a few minutes of rocking, soothing and cuddling, Marco calms down and Mrs. Ruiz gets to spend a few moments with her now calm son before she hands Marco to his care teacher.

To learn how to possibly help Marco with the transition process, Ms. Gabriella asks, “Why do you think the mornings are hard for Marco?” As she listens, she realizes that Mrs. Ruiz is having trouble getting everything organized and to the car. She had put Marco in his car seat and then had to make several trips back in the house to get all of his things. During this back and forth, Marco started crying and never stopped. As she talked, Mrs. Ruiz realized that when Marco saw her come and go, he got anxious and that was the domino that started the morning cascade. She wonders whether packing Marco’s things the evening before and then, in the morning, not putting him in his car seat until the last few items are loaded would help. Ms. Gabriella encourages her to try this idea, and suggests that she also plan to spend a few minutes with Marco in the rocker tomorrow to see if what worked today will help Marco transition tomorrow. After this conversation, Mrs. Ruiz goes off to work feeling like tomorrow will be a better day.

Emotional Development:
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize his or her own feelings.

Emotional Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.
Crying...Throughout the Day

Liana, 6 months, arrives with her uncle at the home of Ms. Heidi, her family child care teacher. Liana is fussing and fretting when she arrives. Ms. Heidi takes Liana from her uncle saying, “Good morning sweetie, why are you fussing this morning?” Uncle John tells Ms. Heidi about Liana’s evening and reports that she slept well, finished a bottle just before they left home and that he isn’t sure what could be bothering her. Ms. Heidi assures him as he leaves that Liana will be alright.

“Well Liana, sounds like you are ready to play since you just ate,” says Ms. Heidi. She lays her on a blanket on the floor under a musical activity gym. Ms. Heidi plays with her for a minute or two, pushing several buttons on the musical gym. Liana kicks her feet and bats at the hanging rattles as Ms. Heidi looks on.

After a few minutes, Ms. Heidi goes to the kitchen to get Zachary a bottle. Liana starts fussing. Ms. Heidi returns, looks down at Liana and nicely says, “Your Uncle John said you can’t be tired or hungry. Play with the musical gym.” As Ms. Heidi talks, Liana calms down and gazes at her. As soon as Ms. Heidi moves out of her sight, she starts fussing.

Ms. Heidi returns to Liana. She plays a few “This Little Piggy” games with her toes. Liana is happy and content, squealing with laughter when the last little piggy goes “wee, wee, wee all the way home.” When Ms. Heidi gets up to walk away, almost immediately Liana begins to fuss. Ms. Heidi is getting frustrated that her attempts to help Liana don’t seem to be working for very long. She is only getting a moment or two to care for, and interact with, the other children before Liana gets upset. By the end of the day, Ms. Heidi feels like she has done nothing but respond to Liana all day long. She wonders if Liana is getting spoiled by her attentiveness.

“Even when you are caring for others, I still need to know that you are caring for me.”

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Liana, 6 months, arrives with her uncle at the home of Ms. Heidi, her family child care teacher. Liana is fussing and fretting when she arrives. Ms. Heidi takes Liana from her uncle saying, “Good morning sweetie, why are you fussing this morning?” Uncle John tells Ms. Heidi about Liana’s evening and reports that she slept well, finished a bottle just before they left home and that he isn’t sure what could be bothering her. Ms. Heidi assures him as he leaves that Liana will be alright.

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More about... crying

Comforting a crying child, regardless of the reason for his distress, teaches a child that you are trustworthy and will meet his needs. A child whose needs are met promptly and compassionately is likely to develop other positive coping strategies instead of relying on crying behaviors. Keep in mind, crying doesn’t necessarily mean “Hold me.” Rather than picking up a crying child right away, try to discover what he needs. Position yourself so he can see you. Gently say comforting words. This response communicates “I know you need me, and I am here for you.” Attending to a child in distress isn’t spoiling him, it is teaching him he is valued and loved.
Ask Yourself

- What is going on with Liana? She is rested and just ate, but she is still fussy.
- Why isn’t Liana content playing with the musical gym? She usually enjoys it.

Give It a Try

- Check Liana for signs of illness or injury, for example, a rise in temperature, a rash, or sluggish behavior. Check to see if her clothing/diaper is too tight or pinching.
- Observe Liana’s interaction with toys and materials. If she appears uninterested, try a different toy. Children’s interests change as they learn new skills and like adults, children can become bored. Rotating toys encourages curiosity, helps develop new skills, and adds interest to a child’s day.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

- Why does Liana seem to need my attention to be happy and content?
- Will all of this attention spoil Liana?
- How can I take care of the other children if Liana needs so much attention?
- What can I do to help Liana learn to self-comfort and play on her own?

Give It a Try

- Realize you may be Liana’s favorite “toy” at the moment. Children need conversation and engaging play time with adults to feel safe and to support their development.
- Respond to infants’ cues. It will not spoil them; you are meeting their needs. Through consistent and responsive caregiving, children become secure and will become more comfortable not being in close proximity to you.
- Engage with Liana verbally when you are unable to engage with her physically, so you can be a secure base for her. Describe what you are doing and when you will be able to be with her again. Sing a favorite song, repeat a rhyme, and gaze at her so she knows you are still nearby and available to her.
- When Liana is playing on her own, stay nearby. Avoid the tendency to leave her just because she appears to be content. This teaches her that you are dependable and will be there to meet her needs even when you aren’t close by.
- Watch for cues that indicate you need to reengage with her and do so before she begins to fuss. Help her learn that you know what she needs and will meet her needs.
- Play with and respond to children in pairs and small groups as well as individually. Position Liana near other children so you can take turns connecting with her visually, verbally, or physically. Give her the opportunity to see other children and watch what they are doing.
- Provide a variety of toys and materials within Liana’s reach that she can explore on her own.
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Ms. Heidi conducts her daily morning health check and also checks to see if Liana’s clothing may be too tight or irritating her since she is out of sorts this morning. Ms. Heidi also checks to see if Liana’s diaper needs changed. All is fine.

“Well Liana, sounds like you are ready to play since you just ate,” says Ms. Heidi. She lays her on a blanket on the floor under a musical activity gym. Ms. Heidi plays with her for a minute or two, pushing several buttons on the musical gym. Happily, Liana kicks her feet and bats at the hanging rattles as Ms. Heidi looks on.

Knowing Liana needs her near, Ms. Heidi repositions Liana and the musical gym so Liana can see the kitchen and tells Liana, “I have to get Zachary his bottle. I’ll be right back and you can keep playing with the musical gym. Let’s sing a song while I get the bottle.” Liana can hear Ms. Heidi singing and intently watches the doorway for Ms. Heidi to reemerge. Liana has a frown but isn’t fussing.

Liana begins to fuss when Ms. Heidi feeds Zachary his bottle. Ms. Heidi and Zachary move closer to Liana and Ms. Heidi talks to both Zachary and Liana. This pleases them both.

Once bottle feeding is over, Ms. Heidi offers Liana and Zachary each a rattle and spends a few minutes with them before changing Zachary’s diaper. She holds a rattle in front of Liana so she can see it, and then places the rattle on the floor nearby. Liana looks at Ms. Heidi, then at the rattle, and reaches over to grab it. When Liana is engaged with the rattle, Ms. Heidi watches her play on her own. When Liana looks at her, Ms. Heidi smiles and talks to her about the rattle.

Ms. Heidi tells Liana, “I have to change Zachary’s diaper now. Let’s move you to the cozy area with your blanket, doll and rattle so you can watch me change Zachary’s diaper. I’ll be back as soon as I can.” Once Liana is comfortable, Ms. Heidi starts the diaper change with Zachary. Almost immediately, Liana begins to fuss and fret. Ms. Heidi talks to her saying, “I hear you, Liana, I’m right here. I will be right over when I finish changing Zachary’s diaper.” Ms. Heidi softly sings, “Shake, shake, shake your rattle,” to a made up tune. Liana stops fussing and listens to Ms. Heidi’s voice while she fingers her blanket. When Zachary has a clean diaper and both have washed their hands, Ms. Heidi comes back over to Liana and lays Zachary nearby. She offers him a rattle and then turns to Liana and says, “I’m back just like I said I would be. I think Zachary likes rattles, too.” Then she sings the rattle song again, alternately focusing on Liana and Zachary as she sings.
Liam, 6 months, is a feisty baby. He has irregular eating and sleeping schedules, highly intense reactions, and a high sensitivity to stimulation in the environment. His primary care teacher, Mr. Jason, has learned to respond to his temperament and has a calming effect on him when he is in the classroom. Many times Liam is content and able to participate in activities. When Mr. Jason leaves for a break or at the end of his work day, Liam has a very hard time.

Different teachers are assigned to relieve Mr. Jason for his breaks and when he leaves for the day. The staff doesn’t like to cover for Mr. Jason because of how difficult Liam can be when Mr. Jason is out of the classroom. The director lets staff rotate the responsibility so none of them has to deal with Liam every day.

Today, Ms. Chloe is covering Mr. Jason’s break. When she comes into the classroom, Mr. Jason is in the rocking chair with Liam who is agitated and crying. She approaches Mr. Jason and Liam and asks loudly over Liam’s crying, “How long has he been crying?” Mr. Jason says Liam is tired and needs a nap. He begins the process of transferring Liam to Ms. Chloe. Liam’s crying intensifies as he is moved. Mr. Jason rubs Liam’s head and tells Liam that he is leaving for his break. He promises that he will be back.

Ms. Chloe holds Liam in the rocker and begins rocking rapidly, putting a little bounce in the rock with her foot. She covers Liam’s eyes with his blanket to screen out the light from the classroom and begins to hum a lullaby. Liam’s crying intensifies, but Ms. Chloe persists. After a while, Ms. Chloe gets up from the rocker and starts walking around the classroom, bouncing Liam as she walks. He continues to cry. When nothing seems to be working, she puts Liam in his crib and leaves him to put himself to sleep as she takes care of the other children. When Mr. Jason returns, Liam is still in his crib crying and has not had a nap.

“Care for me in ways that are especially soothing for me.”
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Children are born with specific temperaments that affect how they respond and react to situations, people and the environment. Like children, we are also influenced by our temperament, but by drawing upon our life experiences and combining that with our ability to regulate our behavior, we are better able to deal with changes in our schedules and the environment. By understanding whether a child’s temperament is flexible, cautious or feisty, and by implementing care teaching strategies that support different temperament types, you can be responsive to children’s needs and help transitions go more smoothly for everyone.
Take Another Look

**Ask Yourself**
- Why does Liam have a hard time when I go on break?
- How can I help the break person respond to Liam’s temperament so he does not have such a difficult time with a different teacher?

**Give It a Try**
- Understand that Liam has attached to you as his primary caregiver and you have learned how to respond to best meet his needs. Give Liam time to adjust to a new care teacher by overlapping shifts and slowly transferring his care to another teacher.
- Assign one or two consistent care teacher(s) to cover for the primary care teacher during breaks and at the end of the day.
- Share information about Liam’s temperament with the person who is covering for you. Also share what you know about how to modify interactions and responses to match Liam’s temperament.

Keep Watching

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I help Ms. Chloe manage while I am on my break?

**Give It a Try**
- Ask Ms. Chloe to take a look at Liam’s daily report when she comes into the classroom to find out what has happened during the day and what Liam might need next.
- Make a plan for Ms. Chloe to spend some time observing you with Liam, to observe the techniques that are successful and that might work when you are out of the room.

Watch Some More

**Ask Yourself**
- What should Ms. Chloe do to help Liam get to sleep?
- After Ms. Chloe puts him in the crib, what else can she do to help Liam calm down?
- How long should I let Liam cry?

**Give It a Try**
- Reduce the stimulation to help Liam make the transition to napping. Turn down the lights and limit the stimulation from the rocking and bouncing. Try soothing, gentle moves and/or quiet singing; watch for Liam’s responses to the variations in caregiving to see what is working.
- Keep helping a child in distress. If other children need your attention, check in with Liam frequently after you put him into the crib so he won’t feel like he has been abandoned. Show him you are still available by staying in view, making eye contact, and by periodically talking to him calmly and softly.
- After a few minutes in the crib, try again to help Liam. Try different strategies to help Liam calm down or repeat ones that you have seen Mr. Jason use that have worked in the past.
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The first thing Ms. Chloe does when she enters the room is check Liam’s daily note sheet to see how his day is progressing. She notices that he has not had a nap all morning and wonders if this might be the cause of the crying. The teachers have learned that Liam does better if the transition isn’t rushed. So, Ms. Chloe greets other children before approaching Liam. Kneeling by Mr. Jason, Ms. Chloe starts talking quietly for a few minutes, checking to see if he has any information she needs to have before his break. Liam hears her voice and notices that she has arrived in the classroom. Mr. Jason confirms that Liam needs a nap and passes him gently to Ms. Chloe. Both teachers anticipate that the transition will be upsetting to Liam, and it is. Mr. Jason tells Liam that he is leaving for his break but he will be back.

Ms. Chloe holds Liam in the same way that Mr. Jason was holding him and sits down in the rocker. She rocks very slowly, avoiding rapid movements. She holds Liam’s blanket near his face, without covering it, to screen out some of the light from the classroom and hums his favorite lullaby very softly. Liam’s crying persists. Ms. Chloe relaxes and holds his body so he can move his legs and arms as needed and continues the rocking and humming. After a few minutes, Liam begins to calm down and looks at Ms. Chloe. She smiles at him and says, “Hi, Liam, Mr. Jason is at lunch, and I am here to hold you until you go to sleep.” He looks intently at Ms. Chloe and relaxes just a little more, his crying now just a whimper. After a few minutes of calm rocking and soft singing, Ms. Chloe is able to help Liam settle into his favorite go-to-sleep position and he falls sound asleep.

When she places him in his crib, Liam squirms and settles into the crib. Ms. Chloe waits for a moment, patting him gently. He opens his eyes and Ms. Chloe smiles at him. While she is staying close to Liam, she looks at the other children and smiles at them one by one. After a few minutes, Liam is still fidgeting and fussing. Ms. Chloe continues to pat Liam gently, gazing at him when he opens his eye to check if she is still with him. When Ms. Chloe is sure that Liam is asleep, she moves away to interact with the other children.
Crying...Everyone at the Same Time

Watch

Children arrived earlier than usual today in Ms. Sue and Ms. Shanequia’s infant classroom. The teachers have had a busy time figuring out what each child needs. Louisa, 3 months, and her mother have just arrived. As Ms. Sue helps Louisa say good-bye to her mom, Louisa begins to cry. Ms. Sue goes through a list of possibilities in her head. First, she checks Louisa’s diaper to see if it needs changing. It doesn’t so she puts a bottle in the warmer for her. Louisa continues to cry, getting louder and louder. Soon several other children start crying.

Ms. Shanequia is sitting on the floor in the cozy area with Alana, 7 months, in her arms, Madeline, 5 months, in her lap, and Rosario, 9 months, on a blanket nearby. All three babies start to cry when they hear Louisa’s cries. Rosario is trying her best to scoot over to her teacher so Ms. Shanequia moves closer to her and lets Rosario rest her head on her leg. Rosario stops crying for a moment and looks over at Madeline whose crying has intensified.

Daniel, 6 months, who has been playing contentedly, starts to fret. Ms. Sue says to him, “You are dry and fed. You don’t need anything right now.” Daniel looks up at Ms. Sue and his fretting escalates to crying. Ms. Sue kneels down near him and pats his back for a minute. His crying continues. She says, “I have to feed Louisa. You are not hungry. I’ll be back after Louisa is finished drinking her bottle.”

Ms. Sue sits down in a platform rocker and offers Louisa the bottle. Louisa has been upset for a while and continues to cry even with the bottle in her mouth. Ms. Sue decides to lay her down in her crib to see if she is sleepy. She lays her on her back and offers her a pacifier. Louisa refuses it. Then Ms. Sue rubs Louisa’s cheek with her blanket to see if that will help her calm down. This seems to help a little so Ms. Sue continues. Louisa begins to calm down. In just a minute more, she is sound asleep.

Once Louisa is asleep, it only takes the other children a few moments to stop crying. Madeline and Rosario take a little longer and Alana continues to cry. After a couple more minutes, she calms down as well. The teachers exchange a quick look, communicating with each other how glad they are that all the crying has finally stopped!

“I will react when I hear my friends cry. It is part of my social development.”
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An infant uses different kinds of cries to tell you what he needs to make him feel better. An infant’s cry signals the need for security from a care teacher he has an attachment to. It is how he expresses his feelings of sadness and distress, and his need for physical care. Infants also respond to the emotions of others, which is the earliest form of empathy. In early infancy this response is automatic; toward the end of this infancy stage, infants demonstrate an awareness of other’s feelings. Acknowledging infants’ awareness of others’ emotions, for example, by saying, “Diego is sad, his dad left,” helps infants connect behavior (crying) to emotion (sad) to reason (dad leaving). It helps infants learn about their own emotional reactions as well as understand what others are feeling.
Give It a Try Key
△ = Teacher Interaction ★ = Child Development & Interest
 roma = Environment & Materials ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How do I stay calm when so many children need me?
• How do I begin to help the children in distress?

Give It a Try
◆ Take a few deep breaths to help you stay calm and focused.
◆ Ask for extra staff assistance so no child is in distress for longer than a couple of minutes.
★ Consider that the infants are “telling” you something; “listen” to what they need to ease their distress.
◆ Decrease stimulation in the environment by lowering your voice, dimming lights, and turning off background music.
△ Talk to children who are upset and crying in a low, calm voice. Describe what you are doing and how you are trying to help. This will also help your stress.
△ Provide physical comfort to the child in the most distress. Do not ignore any child.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why does Daniel become upset just as I am feeding Louisa?
• How do I help him calm down?
• What can I do to stop the cycle of crying?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that infants sense when other children are upset and respond in a similar manner.
◆ Use proximity when you can’t pick up crying children. Get close and remind children that you are nearby and available emotionally even though you can’t physically hold them.
◆ Validate how Daniel is feeling, use a soothing voice.
◆ Move Daniel to another area of the room that may allow him to focus on materials to play with. Keep him and all infants in view.
◆ Prepare for arrivals and other hectic times of the day.
★ Learn what triggers each child’s crying and what comforts him.
◆ Help children find ways to comfort and regulate themselves. For example, offer a pacifier; give a child a favorite blanket or other transitional object (stuffed animal, Dad’s t-shirt, etc.); try putting the child in a favorite position; or hold the child in your arms so she can scan the environment to watch what is happening.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• Why won’t Louisa take the bottle or the pacifier?
• What can I do to prevent future experiences like the one I experienced today?

Give It a Try
★ Be patient as Louisa’s emotional state changes. Read her cues to help you understand what she may need to calm down. Younger infants may take a few minutes to recognize that things are different.
◆ When things calm down, review what happened and determine what you can do to prevent contagious crying events like this one.
◆ Consider how communicating and working with families may ease transitions.

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Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Children arrived early today in Ms. Sue and Ms. Shanequia’s infant classroom. The teachers have had a busy time meeting each child’s needs. Louisa, 3 months, has just arrived. As Ms. Sue helps her say good-bye to her mom, Louisa begins to cry. Ms. Sue checks Louisa’s daily report to see if her mom left information about her care. She learns that Louisa has been fussy all morning. Ms. Sue checks Louisa’s diaper and puts a bottle in the warmer. Louisa’s cries get louder and louder. Soon, several other children are crying. Ms. Sue whispers softly to Louisa to help her calm down and attempts to lower the stimulation in the room by turning off some of the overhead lights.

Ms. Shanequia is sitting on the floor with three crying babies. Alana, 7 months, is on her shoulder, Madeline, 5 months, in her lap, and Rosario, 9 months, is on a blanket nearby. Ms. Shanequia is talking quietly to Alana. Rosario scoots closer to rest her head on Ms. Shanequia’s leg and settles down. Madeline stops crying for a moment and looks over at Rosario who starts crying again. Ms. Shanequia puts Madeline down on a blanket, seats Alana next to her, and picks up Rosario. She retrieves Rosario’s pacifier and blanket from her cubby. Ms. Shanequia offers the pacifier and blanket to Rosario who accepts them and calms down.

Daniel, 6 months, has started fussing. Ms. Sue knows he is likely responding to Louisa’s distress. She sits down on an ottoman near Daniel and says, “Daniel, you hear Louisa’s cry. I think she is hungry, so I put a bottle in the warmer. I am right here. Let’s see what might interest you.” As she jiggles Louisa gently on her shoulder, Ms. Sue offers Daniel several toys. He quiets as he looks from one toy to another, resting his gaze on a mirror. Ms. Sue makes sure he sees his image in the mirror before getting Louisa’s bottle. On the way, she gets Louisa’s favorite blanket out of her cubby.

Ms. Sue sits down in the rocker to feed Louisa. She has been upset for a while and it takes a few tries for her to realize that the bottle is in her mouth. Ms. Sue waits patiently, holding the bottle still and stroking her cheek gently. Louisa is still crying and not able to suck on the bottle. Ms. Sue decides to lay her down in her crib to see if she is sleepy. She puts her on her back in her crib, offers her the pacifier, and gently rubs her cheek with her blanket. Louisa refuses the pacifier but seems to like the blanket, so Ms. Sue uses it to continue rubbing her cheek slowly. After a few minutes, Ms. Sue tries the pacifier again. Louisa latches onto it and falls sound asleep. Ms. Sue returns the blanket to Louisa’s cubby and joins Daniel on the floor. As soon as Louisa is quiet, it only takes the other children a few minutes to calm down. The teachers exchange a quick look, communicating how glad they are that the crying has stopped!

At the end of the day, Ms. Shanequia and Ms. Sue talk about how difficult the morning was for them. They decide to check in with families to update arrival times and eating and sleeping schedules. They will remind parents to write information about their children’s routines at home on the daily report. Finally, the teachers will rearrange the space to provide a quiet place for babies when they are over stimulated by other children’s crying and will seek creative ways to decrease the stimulation in the room.

Social Development:
The child will understand and respond to the emotions of others.

Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her internal states and feelings, as well as stimulation from the outside world.

Cognitive Development:
The child will be able to remain focused on a task or object and to persist in the face of obstacles.
Into Everything...As They Roam Around the Room

Eight-month-old Dante has just started to attend his child care program. He is a busy little guy who loves to be on the floor where he can scoot around on his stomach and find interesting things to explore. Ms. Delores has given Ellie, 11 months, a variety of nutritious finger foods. Ellie puts one bite of food into her mouth and drops another piece onto the floor.

It doesn’t take long before Dante scoots over to the feeding area and picks up the interesting bites from the floor. He grabs a green pea and a cube of fresh peach and pops them into his mouth. Ms. Delores notices and says in a firm voice, “Dante, move away. You can’t eat food from the floor!” Not wanting to leave Ellie when she is eating, Ms. Delores sits him up a couple of feet from the highchairs, handing him a plush toy.

Dante, not interested in the plush toy, spies a basket of snap-beads which he soon tips over. Shaking them and realizing they don’t make noise, he scoots to the manipulatives shelf and bats at the toys on the bottom row, tipping them in the process. He also finds a soft baby doll with a hat on her head. He pulls the hat off, takes a good look, and then pops the hat into his mouth. Co-teacher Ms. Keisha, seeing Dante in action, removes the doll hat from his mouth and hands him a teething ring.

Unsatisfied, he scoots to Cherish, 5 months, who is lying under a floor gym kicking and batting at the toys hanging from it. He is fascinated by Cherish and the hanging toys and nudges against her to play. Ms. Keisha says to Dante, “There isn’t room for you here, let Cherish play. Why don’t you look at some books?” She moves him to the book space and hands him a book. He looks at the cover briefly, scans the room and is off again.
Eight-month-old Dante has just started to attend his child care program. He is a busy little guy who loves to be on the floor where he can scoot around on his stomach and find interesting things to explore. Ms. Delores has given Ellie, 11 months, a variety of nutritious finger foods. Ellie puts one bite of food into her mouth and drops another piece onto the floor.

It doesn’t take long before Dante scoots over to the feeding area and picks up the interesting bites from the floor. He grabs a green pea and a cube of fresh peach and pops them into his mouth. Ms. Delores notices and says in a firm voice, “Dante, move away. You can’t eat food from the floor!” Not wanting to leave Ellie when she is eating, Ms. Delores sits him up a couple of feet from the highchairs, handing him a plush toy.

Dante, not interested in the plush toy, spies a basket of snap-beads which he soon tips over. Shaking them and realizing they don’t make noise, he scoots to the manipulatives shelf and bats at the toys on the bottom row, tipping them in the process. He also finds a soft baby doll with a hat on her head. He pulls the hat off, takes a good look, and then pops the hat into his mouth. Co-teacher Ms. Keisha, seeing Dante in action, removes the doll hat from his mouth and hands him a teething ring.

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Infants are curious and compelled to move and explore. Through movement, babies make discoveries about themselves, the environment and gain a sense of mastery. By using large muscles (legs, arm, trunk of body), coordinating movements and balancing, a child moves through the environment and strengthens other developmental domains. For instance, his ability to move plays a big role in his social interactions with peers. She has access to materials to use her small muscles (fingers, hands) by picking an object up, turning it over, and moving its different pieces. He is building thinking skills, which is cognitive development. He learns how items fit into space, if there is a reaction to his action and how an item is like or unlike another item (grouping and categorizing). It is important to give all children the ability to move about their environment and interact with peers and materials. Some children will need your assistance.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• How do I keep the feeding space separate from the children’s play areas?
• How can I be responsive to Dante’s interest in food?
• What can I do to maintain a healthful and safe feeding environment?

Give It a Try

▲ Create intriguing spaces with a variety of interesting objects for Dante to explore so dropped food is not his focus.
▲ Position yourself so you can monitor children at play when you are feeding others. Talk to Dante during his play so he knows you are there for him.
▲ Consider if Dante is hungry. Infants’ feeding schedules change as they grow. Observe Dante’s behavior. Talk with his family about changes in routine he may be experiencing at home, and about the feeding care practices at the program.
▲ Never leave children who are eating unattended. Maintain visual contact and stay in close proximity. Being able to hear the child is not enough, because choking occurs without sounds.
▲ Interact with children while they eat. This may reduce the time Ellie spends playing with her food. Your responsive interactions strengthen your relationship with her.
▲ Remove food and quickly clean the floor as soon as feeding is over. Make intermittent clean up a part of your routine throughout the day. Thorough cleaning should be done at the beginning or end of the day.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• How can I encourage Dante to play with materials, instead of roaming around the room?
• How can I create an interesting learning environment?
• Why is it recommended to avoid using infant swings and Exersaucers in infant care?

Give It a Try

▲ Engage Dante. Make eye contact often, and talk with him about his activities.
▲ Involve support staff or co-teachers in play alongside Dante.
▲ Offer a variety of intriguing and developmentally appropriate toys for the varying abilities of children. Materials should not be too easy or too hard to use. They should be slightly challenging so children can practice emerging skills. Rotate toys to engage Dante’s curiosity.
★ Understand that babies use their senses and emerging physical skills to learn about people and objects. They like to touch things and put them in their mouths.
▲ Distribute materials throughout the room to support Dante’s desire to explore. Provide duplicate materials to reduce conflict.
▲ Resist the urge to restrain Dante from age appropriate exploration, which is significant to his development. Rearrange the room to accommodate his natural interest in the objects around him, allowing for supervision and safety.
Eight-month-old Dante has just started to attend his child care program. He is a busy little guy who loves to be on the floor where he can scoot around on his stomach and find interesting things to explore.

Ms. Delores has given Ellie, 11 months, a variety of nutritious finger foods. Seated in a child-sized chair at a table, Ellie eats enthusiastically, getting most of the food in her mouth, but a few pieces end up on the floor. “Ellie,” Ms. Delores says with a smile. When Ellie tries to drop another piece of food, Ms. Delores raises her hand to block the drop.

It doesn’t take long before Dante scoots over to the feeding area. Co-teacher Ms. Keisha is keeping an eye on Dante and asks Ms. Delores if she would like her to redirect Dante. Ms. Delores says, “Let’s see if he is hungry first.” Ms. Delores says to Dante, “I am feeding Ellie. If you want some food, I’ll get you a feeding chair and you can join us.” She offers to pick him up but he turns away from her. She knows this means he is not interested in eating.

“Ms. Keisha, Dante isn’t hungry. Would you and he like to play?” Ms. Delores asks. Ms. Keisha and Dante giggle and “talk” about what to play with before joining other children playing with musical instruments where Dante begins to make music.

Observing that Dante is now starting to become mobile, Ms. Delores and Ms. Keisha have rotated materials into the environment that he can manipulate and experiment with. Dante soon scoots off, eyeing the new toys on the shelf including a textured sensory inchworm, a mirrored rollie bowl, small wood activity cubes, and a cloth bowl-n-fish set. Ms. Keisha calls to Dante, “Dante, you found the activity cubes. What can you do with them?” Dante is fascinated with the sounds and movements within the cubes as he explores them. Then he discovers how to shake one of the cubes. Shaking it again and again, he listens to the sound it makes and smiles with delight.
So Aggressive...With Others

Jenna, 4 months, and Kaleb, 5 months, are lying on a thin, soft blanket on a patch of grass at their family child care program. Jenna is looking up through the tree branches and kicking her feet happily. Kaleb is on his stomach, lifting his head to scan the environment. Eight-month-old Idalia is sitting near Jenna’s feet pulling on the grass blades in front of her. Care teacher, Ms. Vivien, sits on the blanket watching the activity of all three babies.

When Jenna makes some cooing sounds, Idalia turns toward her and rolls onto her stomach. The babies are quite close to each other now, almost face to face. Idalia reaches out with her hand and rakes it across Jenna’s face. Jenna’s reaction is immediate – she starts crying and blinking her eyes as Idalia’s hand swipes her face. Ms. Vivien springs into action and gently holds Idalia’s hands saying, “No hitting, Idalia.” Then she sits Idalia back up.

Idalia turns her attention to Kaleb who has rolled over on his back and is looking intently at his hands with the leaves of the trees behind them. Kaleb “talks” while looking at his hands, babbling with the inflection and rhythm of the adult talk he hears around him. Idalia gets on all fours, lunging forward until she is eye level with Kaleb. She grabs his hand and holds on tight. Kaleb looks over at her and grunts, trying to pull his hand away. He can’t so he starts to fuss. Ms. Vivien turns to see what is going on and immediately pulls Idalia away from Kaleb saying, “Leave him alone, Idalia, stop bothering him.”

Slightly frustrated that Idalia is requiring so much attention and is bothering the other babies, Ms. Vivien puts Idalia into an infant seat next to her where Idalia can still see her peers; Ms. Vivien hands her a rattle. Idalia arches her back, drops the rattle and starts to cry. Ms. Vivien talks gently to her, but Idalia continues to fuss. Eventually, her resistance and crying stop and she sucks her thumb.

“I’m exploring – not trying to hurt my friends. Separating me from them doesn’t help. It makes me sad and fussy.”
Jenna, 4 months, and Kaleb, 5 months, are lying on a thin, soft blanket on a patch of grass at their family child care program. Jenna is looking up through the tree branches and kicking her feet happily. Kaleb is on his stomach, lifting his head to scan the environment. Eight-month-old Idalia is sitting near Jenna's feet pulling on the grass blades in front of her. Care teacher, Ms. Vivien, sits on the blanket watching the activity of all three babies.

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More about... infant interactions

What is the first thing most people want to do when they see a baby? Touch her of course, with a stroke to her head or arm. Or give her foot a gentle squeeze. Children, including infants and toddlers, want to do the same thing – who can resist a baby? An infant sees an adorable baby next to him and then out goes the hand for a pat, which may turn into a hit or scratch. There are no aggressive intentions, just curiosity and undeveloped motor and cognitive (thinking) skills that will develop with time. Stay close and guide infants in discovering their remarkable peers.
Give It a Try

Recognize that infants are curious about everything around them, including their peers. What Idalia is doing isn't wrong; her intention is not to harm, but to explore and learn.

Keep infants safe by putting a little distance between them, but keep them close enough for visual and vocal interaction. When they creep close to others, stay close to prevent unintentional hitting, or scratching; reposition if needed.

Engage Idalia. Validate her interests by looking where she looks, listening and repeating her vocalizations, and using a gentle touch to keep her from hurting others.

Give It a Try

Respond promptly to Kaleb. Comfort him with your voice and touch, recognize his feelings, and validate that Idalia is too close. Gently guide Idalia’s hand away from Kaleb telling her Kaleb doesn’t want to be touched.

Celebrate Idalia’s ability to move and interact with the world around her. Give her room to practice her new skills; lay objects of interest near Idalia, but out of her reach to spark her curiosity.

Set realistic expectations for an infant’s small and large muscle skills, as well as her ability for appropriate social interactions.

Place your hand over Idalia’s to show her how to touch gently.

Watch Some More

Avoid restraining Idalia. She learns from the opportunities to explore and practice emerging skills.

Be sensitive to Idalia’s verbal and non-verbal cues – crying and arching her back. Describe her actions and your response to her needs by telling her, “I can tell you don’t want to be in the infant seat when you arch your back and cry. How about I get your blanket for you to scoot around on?”

Accept that Idalia’s actions evoke strong feelings in you. Find ways to reflect on the emotional aspects of your work. Develop strategies to manage feelings of frustration such as taking deep breaths, talking with a respected colleague, and possibly learning more activities to use with Idalia.

Put It All Together
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Jenna, 4 months, and Kaleb, 5 months, are lying on a thin, soft blanket on a patch of grass at their family child care program. Jenna is looking up through the tree branches and kicking her feet happily. Kaleb is on his stomach, lifting his head to scan the environment. Eight-month-old Idalia is sitting near Jenna’s feet pulling on the grass blades in front of her. Care teacher, Ms. Vivien, sits on the blanket watching the activity of all three babies.

As Jenna starts cooing, Idalia turns toward her and rolls onto her stomach. Ms. Vivien comments, “You heard Jenna talking. You went from sitting to lying on your stomach.” The babies are quite close to each other now, almost face to face. Ms. Vivien notices that the two are intently looking at each other, and realizes that Jenna seems a little unsure about having Idalia so close. Knowing that Idalia is curious and is developing new large muscle skills, Ms. Vivien moves closer to them. Idalia reaches out toward Jenna’s face and Ms. Vivien gently stops Idalia’s hand, leans in and says to her, “Idalia, you are very close to Jenna. Touch her gently.”

Taking Idalia’s hand she gently strokes Jenna’s arm. Jenna turns her head and smiles at Idalia when she sees Idalia’s smiling face. Idalia reaches her hand toward Jenna’s face. Ms. Vivien intercepts her hand and helps her touch Jenna’s face softly. Jenna turns her face away. Ms. Vivien says, “See Idalia, Jenna thinks you are too close. Let’s move her so no one accidently gets hurt.” She scoots Jenna away from Idalia.

Idalia turns her attention to Kaleb who has rolled over on his back and is looking intently at his hands with the leaves of the trees behind them. Kaleb “talks” to his hands, babbling with the sounds and rhythm of the adult talk he hears around him. Idalia gets on all fours, lunging forward until she is eye level with Kaleb. She grabs his hand and holds on tight. Kaleb looks over at her and grunts, trying to pull his hand away. He can’t so he starts to fuss. Ms. Vivien moves Kaleb saying, “It looks like you don’t want Idalia to hold your hand so tight.” Then she talks to Idalia, “Idalia, Kaleb doesn’t want to hold your hand right now. I’m going to move you so you have room to practice scooting forward.” She repositions Idalia so there is room for her to scoot without touching Kaleb.

Soon Idalia is too close to Kaleb again. Ms. Vivien is frustrated that Idalia got too close so quickly. She takes a deep breath as she figures out what to do next. She knows that Idalia is trying to interact with Kaleb. She thinks about getting an infant seat to restrict Idalia’s movements but rejects that idea because not only is Idalia enjoying scooting and moving around, she is developing large muscle skills. Her freedom to explore teaches her about spatial relations and builds her self-awareness and confidence. Jenna and Kaleb enjoy her company, too. Ms. Vivien decides to offer Idalia another alternative. Laying out an extra blanket, near Jenna and Kaleb’s blanket, Ms. Vivien tells Idalia, “I laid out a blanket and toys for you so everyone can have more space.” She repositions herself so she can watch and interact with everyone as they play.
Mouthing

Watch

Samira, 6 months, is awake, alert, and playing on the floor at the home of her family child care teacher Ms. Neema. A safety play mirror inset in a cloth frame and a 3-inch sensory ball are in front of Samira who is lying on her stomach with Ms. Neema sitting nearby.

Samira picks up the sensory ball and examines it intently. She tries to fit it into her mouth, but Ms. Neema gently holds her hand away from her mouth saying, “No chewing on the ball. It is for holding and looking at.” Ms. Neema doesn’t like for infants to mouth toys. She knows mouthed toys spread germs and she wants children to learn that food, not toys, go into their mouths. Samira, however, is persistent and puts the ball up against her mouth when Ms. Neema releases her hand.

Tiring of lying on her stomach, Samira rolls over on her back. Ms. Neema hands Samira the play mirror which she grips with both hands. Samira tips the mirror and pulls the cloth frame to her mouth. Ms. Neema stops her, turning the mirror toward Samira’s face saying, “Take a look, Samira, you can see your face.” Uninterested, Samira puts the frame of the mirror back in her mouth. When she loses her grip on the mirror, Ms. Neema lays it on top of the shelf to wash later, sighing at her inability to keep the toys out of Samira’s mouth.

“I am learning about the world around me when I mouth objects. Please be sure these items are safe for me.”
Samira, 6 months, is awake, alert, and playing on the floor at the home of her family child care teacher Ms. Neema. A safety play mirror inset in a cloth frame and a 3-inch sensory ball are in front of Samira who is lying on her stomach with Ms. Neema sitting nearby.

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Young children learn by using all of their senses. This includes using mouthing to learn the differences in textures, density (hard/soft), how things fit in space, and how they taste. This enables them to make connections and categorize items in their environment as a foundation for further learning. However, infants and mobile infants are too young to know the difference between what should or shouldn’t be mouthed so it is the care teacher’s job to provide a variety of safe items for children to explore. As children grow with the support of knowledgeable and responsive care teachers, they will come to learn what should/should not be mouthed and the appropriate way to use materials.
Give It a Try Key

△ Teacher Interaction  ★ Child Development & Interest
◆ Environment & Materials ♦ Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What do infants learn by putting things in their mouths?
• How can I keep a clean and sanitary environment?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that infants learn by using all of their senses. This includes using mouthing, also known as oral exploration. Samira is learning about textures, density (hard/soft), how things fit in space, and how they taste.
★ Consider that Samira is coordinating her oral muscle movements (use of tongue, chewing) by mouthing objects and is strengthening small muscle skills (hands, fingers) by moving objects to/from her mouth.
★ Resist the urge to stop infants from mouthing; it is an important form of learning.
▷ Develop and use an easy system for removing toys from play and cleaning/sanitizing toys that have been mouthed. Put mouthed/unsanitary toys into a soiled toy container, which is easily accessible to adults. Set a schedule to properly clean and sanitize toys frequently.
▷ Immediately remove a mouthed toy from play once the infant has finished using it. Place it in the soiled toy container. Add a variety of toys to the environment that are clean and ready for play so children have play materials during the cleaning/sanitizing process.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I support Samira’s need to mouth objects?

Give It a Try
▷ Provide an interesting array of safe and appropriate objects for infants to mouth and handle. Choose toys that are visually interesting and offer a variety of sensory experiences. Include toys that make sounds and a variety of textured objects.
△ Avoid interrupting infants when they are engaged in exploration, unless there is a safety hazard. Let Samira spend time discovering all aspects of the mirror to satisfy her curiosity.
△ Create a language-rich environment by describing Samira’s actions. Name what she is playing with, describe textures she may be experiencing with her hands and mouth, and comment on her actions.
△ Make exploration of objects an interactive experience for infants. When handing the mirror to Samira, show her how she can see herself and you in the mirror. Talk to her about who she sees.
△ Offer Samira a choice of toys as she loses interest in the one she is handling.
Samira, 6 months, is awake, alert, and playing on the floor at the home of her family child care teacher Ms. Neema. A safety play mirror inset in a cloth frame and a 3-inch sensory ball are in front of Samira who is lying on her stomach with Ms. Neema sitting nearby.

Samira picks up the sensory ball and examines it intently. She tries to fit it into her mouth. Ms. Neema says, “You have the red ball. How does it feel in your mouth, Samira? Does it feel bumpy?” Ms. Neema knows that infants use mouthing as one of the strategies for gathering information about the world around them so she lets Samira take her time exploring the ball.

Tiring of lying on her stomach, Samira rolls over on her back, dropping the ball. Ms. Neema hands her a play mirror and she grips it with both hands. Ms. Neema bends over and positions the mirror so Samira can see her face and Ms. Neema’s face. She says, “Look, Samira, I can see your face! And you can see mine!” Samira looks at Ms. Neema’s face in the mirror, and then at her own. A big smile spreads across her face at this discovery. Samira then tips the mirror and pulls the cloth frame to her mouth. Ms. Neema says, “The mirror has a soft edge – it will feel smooth and soft.”

Ms. Neema understands that mouthed toys can spread germs so she puts the sensory ball in one of the soiled toy containers she has placed around the room out of the infants’ reach. The soiled toys are washed and sanitized on a daily basis so they are ready for play. Ms. Neema is sure to have a variety of extra toys stored in the room that she rotates into play when soiled toys are removed. This ensures that infants have plenty of materials to choose from to support their learning.

Cognitive Development:
The child will understand how things move and fit in space.

Social Development:
The child will have an awareness of his or her relationship to others in a group.

Motor Development:
The child will develop the skill to coordinate the use of his or her tongue and mouth in order to suck, swallow and eventually chew.
**Biting...How to Stop It**

Infant care teacher Ms. Jamie is sitting in a rocker feeding a bottle to Avery, 6 months. Michelle, 5 months, is on the floor playing with rattles. Katherine, 7 months, scoots and rolls closer to where Michelle is on the floor. Katherine ends up very close to Michelle’s socked foot. It doesn’t take long for Katherine to lower her mouth to Michelle’s foot. As Katherine mouths the foot, Michelle fusses and then begins to cry loudly.

When Ms. Jamie hears Michelle, she jumps up, lays Avery down, and hurries over to the two infants. She picks up Katherine and says, “No biting. That hurt Michelle.” Ms. Jamie moves her away from Michelle. Startled by the teacher’s intense reaction and the sudden movement, Katherine fusses.

Ms. Jamie picks up Michelle to comfort her. “It is alright. That couldn’t have hurt too bad. Here, lie on the mat near Avery and me.” Avery is now crying, wanting to be fed. Ms. Jamie returns to the rocker and continues to feed Avery.

“**At this age I mouth everything, including my friends, so keep your eyes on me.”**
Watch

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more about...oral exploration

Oral exploration by infants is an important part of typical early learning. It is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure babies don’t get hurt by this developmental behavior. The teacher can support oral exploration by setting up the environment to prevent oral exploration of other children, by providing infants who are teething with clean, safe toys to mouth, by being attentive to their play, and, if needed, by calmly redirecting the children to appropriate choices.
Ask Yourself
• How can I reduce the chance of one infant mouthing another?
• What can I do to still meet the needs of other children when I’m caring for one child?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that oral exploration is one of the ways infants learn about things around them. They treat another infant’s foot and a rattle the same way when it comes to oral exploration.
★ Recognize that oral exploration by an infant is not a biting incident.
▲ Anticipate oral exploration. Be available to facilitate interactions between children who are close together on the floor.
▷ Provide a variety of interesting materials that infants can explore orally and can manipulate by themselves.
▷ Create more than one area where infants can spend time on the floor. While caring for other children, place infants close together so they can see and hear their peers, but are out of each other’s reach. Keep every infant in your line of sight.
▲ Observe children carefully. Intervene promptly when they get too close to each other.
▲ Stay connected to the infant you are feeding and those playing near you by talking to the children, describing what they are doing and what you are doing.
▲ Join infants in play and facilitate interactions when you are free to do so.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can infants feel secure and supported after an incident such as this one?
• What information about oral exploration should be shared with families?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that the incident was unintentional.
▲ React in a calm manner. Infants react to the emotions you display.
▲ Comfort children immediately who show distress.
▲ Affirm children’s feelings and recognize why they are in distress.
▲ Ask a co-teacher for assistance if one is available.
★ Reassure families that an infant’s oral exploration of objects and other people is typical development.
▲ Share information with families about oral exploration and children’s interest in learning through their senses. Suggest safe, inexpensive ways for families to offer appropriate oral motor stimulation to their infants at home.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Infant care teacher Ms. Jamie is feeding Avery, 6 months, a bottle near the area where two other babies are playing on their backs on the floor. She put a little space between the children so they can’t unintentionally hurt each other. She has given them a variety of infant toys that are easy for the infants to manipulate on their own.

As she attends to feeding Avery, Ms. Jamie periodically looks up at the other babies, commenting on what they are doing and making sure they are both occupied with a teether or a rattle. Ms. Jamie says, “Katherine, you are shaking the keys.” Katherine turns her head, looks at Ms. Jamie and smiles. Ms. Jamie continues, “When I am finished feeding Avery her bottle, I’ll join you.” After several minutes, Katherine scoots and rolls closer to Michelle. A socked foot ends up very close to Katherine’s mouth. Katherine lowers her head to it and mouths it, resulting in fussiness and loud cries from Michelle.

Ms. Jamie is already in motion by the time Katherine mouths Michelle’s foot. She looks at Avery and says, “I need to help Katherine and Michelle.” She places Avery on a blanket on the floor and says, “I’ll be right back.” Then, she gets close to Michelle and asks her if she can help. Ms. Jamie picks Michelle up and comforts her saying, “You didn’t like Katherine mouthing your toe! It hurt.” Ms. Jamie turns to Katherine, gets her attention by calling her name, and says in a calm voice, “Ouch, Katherine. Your mouth hurt Michelle.”

When Michelle calms down, Ms. Jamie reaches over and takes several additional toys appropriate for mouthing from a basket on a nearby shelf. She offers them to Katherine and says, “These toys are for your mouth.” She moves Katherine to a different floor play area a little further away from Michelle, but still close enough to engage with Ms. Jamie and feel connected to the group. Ms. Jamie returns to Avery. Seeing Ms. Jamie coming, Avery smiles, starts kicking her feet and waving her arms. Ms. Jamie says, “I’m sorry I had to put you down. I told you I’d come back and here I am. I’ll help you finish your bottle now.”

After Avery is finished with her bottle and asleep in her crib, Ms. Jamie joins Michelle and Katherine on the floor, talking and playing with them.

Later in the day, Ms. Jamie takes a moment to write a note to Michelle’s family explaining what happened and how she handled the incident. Knowing it will cause some concern for the family, she adds what she will do to prevent it from happening again. She places some written information about mouthing and oral exploration, and their developmental importance, on each child’s clipboard for families to take home to read when they have time.

Language & Communication Development: The child will comprehend the message of another’s communications.

Social Development: The child will engage with other children.

Cognitive Development: The child will remember people, objects and events.
Biting…Talking with Families

Age Group: Infant

Milena, 8 months, is sitting in the play area next to Colin, 9 months, at their family child care program. Milena is playing with stacking rings and mouthing on them. She also has teethers within her reach. Colin is busy taking plastic animals out of a bin. Milena leans over to Colin and puts her mouth on his arm. Colin begins to cry. His care teacher, Ms. Suzanne, comes over and picks him up. She comforts him and moves him away from Milena. Ms. Suzanne is already worried about how she will talk with Colin’s family about the bite.

At the end of the day, Mrs. Beck arrives to pick up Colin and she appears to be in a rush. Ms. Suzanne approaches her and says, “You’ll find an incident report on your clipboard. Colin was bitten on the arm today. It happened so quickly, I didn’t even see it.” Mrs. Beck is upset that Colin was bitten and cuddles him saying, “Poor baby, you were bitten.” Mrs. Beck says to Ms. Suzanne, “You should have been watching him better. I expect you to not let him get hurt.” Ms. Suzanne apologizes, “I’m sorry, but I was caring for another infant.” Mrs. Beck replies, “That is no excuse. I can’t be here to protect him. That is your job.” Mrs. Beck gathers Colin’s things and hurries out the door.

“My family will be upset to hear I was bitten because they love me.”
Milena, 8 months, is sitting in the play area next to Colin, 9 months, at their family child care program. Milena is playing with stacking rings and mouthing on them. She also has teethers within her reach. Colin is busy taking plastic animals out of a bin. Milena leans over to Colin and puts her mouth on his arm. Colin begins to cry. His care teacher, Ms. Suzanne, comes over and picks him up. She comforts him and moves him away from Milena. Ms. Suzanne is already worried about how she will talk with Colin’s family about the bite.

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Maintaining a trusting relationship with families is crucial to providing respectful care for their children. The way you talk with a family member about biting incidents can have a big effect on teacher-family relationships. Families want to trust that you are caring for their children at all times and that you are diligent in keeping them safe. They want you to have the knowledge and skills to know why biting occurs and to actively use strategies to prevent it. Family members also need assurance that you are empathetic and know how their child, in particular, likes to be comforted when in distress. It is essential that you respect them as the most important people in the child’s life, and acknowledge their concern. Taking responsibility for actions that occur is part of a care teacher’s role.
Ask Yourself

- Why do infants at this age bite?
- How should I respond in this situation?

Give It a Try

★ Recognize that exploratory mouthing typically occurs from infancy through about 14 months of age.
★ Understand that infants explore their surroundings through mouthing things (and people) and are not biting. Infants want to find out what things and people taste and feel like. This is one way they learn.
★ Acknowledge that infants don’t mean to harm others.
★ Respond right away to children who are upset or injured. Offer to pick up the child who was bitten or sit close to give comfort. Affirm the child’s feelings.
★ Clean the bitten area, even if the skin is not broken, and follow recommended first-aid procedures.
★ Offer favorite security items to help children regulate their behavior. These items are not a substitute for your attention and care.
★ Provide appropriate alternatives for soothing swollen gums such as teething toys of different textures and chilled teething rings.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

- What strategies can I use with family members to communicate this important information and be responsive to their concerns?

Give It a Try

★ Call family members prior to pick-up time to prepare them that an incident has occurred. This allows time to explain what happened and to answer questions. It also gives the family time to process the information before picking up their child. Then they can focus on their child’s needs when they arrive.
★ Take responsibility for the incident and state this to the family. You are the care teacher and are responsible for keeping children safe.
★ Validate the parent’s feelings about the situation by recognizing how hard it is for families to accept that their child can be hurt by other children while in care away from home.
★ Explain what you did to comfort and care for their child.
★ Describe how you will work to prevent such incidents in the future.
★ Schedule a time to meet with the family, if they desire, so they can talk about concerns and ask questions.
★ Share resources with all parents, explaining reasons why infants explore orally and strategies to help infants learn through oral exploration. Include prevention strategies you use and how you handle these situations when they arise.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Milena, 8 months, is sitting in the play area next to Colin, 9 months, at their family child care program. Milena is playing with stacking rings and mouthing them. She also has teethers within her reach. Colin is busy taking plastic animals out of a bin. Ms. Suzanne, their care teacher, frequently looks at the playing pair while she is helping other infants use the pop-up boxes. Ms. Suzanne sees Milena bend over and put her mouth on Colin’s arm and clench down. She immediately calls to Milena but it is too late. Colin cries out.

Ms. Suzanne comes right over and kneels down in front of Colin and says, “Colin, I’m so sorry that happened to you. May I help you?” Colin lifts his arms as a gesture to be picked up. Ms. Suzanne comforts Colin and tends to his arm. Once he is calm, she places him back with the toy animals. She then turns her attention to Milena. Ms. Suzanne washes Melina’s face because of her excessive drooling and gives her a chilled teether. She calmly says, “Your mouth hurt Colin. Don’t bite him.”

Ms. Suzanne is planning how to talk to Colin’s family about the incident. Not wanting to wait until Colin’s mom arrives at the end of the day, she decides to call Mrs. Beck. Another teacher replaces Ms. Suzanne so she can prepare for and make the call.

Ms. Suzanne prepares for the call by writing a list of what she needs to tell Mrs. Beck. The list includes first stating that Colin was bitten and upset, but after being comforted and having the area cleaned, he returned to playing happily with his favorite toy animals. Secondly, she will explain in detail what happened, remembering to maintain confidentiality, and genuinely apologizing for not being able to protect Colin. She will then express that she will keep a closer eye on Colin and ask Mrs. Beck if she has any questions.

Ms. Suzanne is nervous about making the call, knowing that Mrs. Beck will most likely be upset. When she gets Mrs. Beck on the telephone, Ms. Suzanne asks if it is a good time to talk.

Mrs. Beck’s first question is “Who did this?” Kindly, Ms. Suzanne replies that this is confidential information based on program policy. Mrs. Beck asked, “What were you doing when this happened?” Ms. Suzanne, uncomfortable with the question, knows that Mrs. Beck is concerned her son may not have been closely supervised. Ms. Suzanne answers, “I was interacting with other infants and watching Colin play a short distance away from me. The incident happened very fast, and I wasn’t able to stop it in time.”

Mrs. Beck, who Ms. Suzanne can tell is upset by her tone of voice, replies, “I think you should have been closer to him so you could have stopped it. I have to get back to work. I’ll see you tonight.” Ms. Suzanne replies, “I am sorry. There will be an incident report for you to read and sign when you pick Colin up. Thank you for your time.”

Mrs. Beck is not as upset as she sounded on the phone when she picks up Colin. She thanks Ms. Suzanne for calling and signs the incident report. There is very little discussion about the incident since most of it was discussed on the phone.
I Know I Should...Keep Toys, Activity Areas Open All Day

Watch

Ms. Tisha and Ms. Brie are care teachers in a multiple age classroom. Currently their enrollment is low on toddlers, but they have many infants. Part of their duties include cleaning and sanitizing the equipment and materials daily. With the high number of infants enrolled and the fact that it seems like everything the infants touch goes directly into their mouths, keeping the materials clean has become quite a task. The teachers plan on taking turns cleaning the toys during their break time so they don’t have so many toys to clean at night, which speeds up their closing duties.

In the morning, the teachers place half of all their manipulatives out for the infants to explore. As the infants mouth each item, the teachers remove it and put it into the soiled toy bin. This often upsets the infants. By eleven o’clock in the morning, there are hardly any manipulatives left. All are in the soiled toy bin. In the afternoon, the teachers will set out another container of materials. They repeat the process the next day.

Finn, 6 months, and Raelle, 4 months, have no materials left within their reach. They start to fuss. Ms. Tisha says to them, “Here are a couple of toys,” as she hands them each a toy. The toy handed to Raelle is too heavy and hard for her to manage and she drops it. Finn mouths his for a few seconds and not finding it interesting, drops his too. Ms. Brie hears them fuss and replies, “I’m right here. Let’s move you so you can see Ms. Tisha and me. In a little bit, we’ll get out some new toys.” The children lie watching what is happening around them, often with a dazed or bored look on their faces.
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more about... opportunities for learning

Ongoing access to materials, equipment, and experiences that interest children significantly contributes to their ability to engage in complex play. Children follow their drive to explore materials and discover what they can make happen. They also combine materials to make new discoveries and extend their learning. If materials are often not accessible to children for long periods of time, the children’s opportunities for learning are greatly diminished.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What type of system can I implement in this situation to clean toys and materials?

Give It a Try
◆ Keep in mind that germs spread quickly to other children through the use of toys and materials. Though you can’t prevent children from coming into contact with germs, you can reduce illness for children and yourself with proper health procedures.
★ Acknowledge that infants need accessible, appropriate materials and interactions to enhance learning and development.
◆ Create a way to rotate toys and materials into play that works for you and provides the infants with appropriate play opportunities throughout the day.
◆ Work with co-teachers and administrators, if applicable, to discuss a cleaning schedule.
◆ Never clean toys or materials when children are near. Cleaning and sanitizing solutions can harm children when airborne or through direct contact.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why is it important that the infants have access to a variety of materials throughout the day?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that infants learn through exploration. This includes using their eyes, ears, mouth, hands, fingers and body in a variety of ways.
★ Offer infants objects they can manipulate to increase their eye-hand coordination, which is a pre-writing skill.
★ Provide materials of different sizes, textures, sounds, functions and shapes to help children learn to group and categorize things, which supports pre-math skills.
★ Give infants a variety of materials that will allow them to explore how their actions cause reactions. By shaking a set of toy keys, for example, an infant realizes he can cause a clattering sound.
★ Keep in mind that children need respectful, responsive interactions with adults, contact with peers, and access to a variety of materials to support their learning and development.
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Ms. Tisha and Ms. Brie decide to try a new system for rotating toys into play for the infants. They ask parents to donate used small baskets, plastic and metal bowls, and plastic shoebox size containers. Instead of putting out all of the manipulatives they have, half in the morning and half in the afternoon, the teachers have decided to put out several containers with fewer toys throughout the day.

Placing fewer items in several containers gives infants some choices without overwhelming them. Also, by having fewer toys accessible at one time, the infants can easily see what is available and may have an easier time reaching and grasping what they want. The teachers store the extra toys in a larger bin in their in room closet. When infants lose interest in a toy and soiled toys are placed in the soiled toy bin, the teachers grab some toys from the bin in the closet and rotate them into play.

Finn, 6 months, is laying on the floor chewing on teething links. He swings his arm and the links move in the air. He watches them move. He shakes the links in excitement then they break from his grasp. Ms. Brie, watching, approaches Finn. “Where did your links go? Here are your links,” she says pleasantly. Finn grasps the links, babbles and smiles. Ms. Brie mimics his babbling sounds and smiles.

Ms. Brie and Ms. Tisha had an earlier discussion and decided to let the infants keep playing with toys they have mouthed for as long as they are interested in them instead of taking the toys from the children immediately. This way, the infant benefits from extended play and the teachers have to wash fewer toys.

Raelle, 4 months, has difficulty holding onto many manipulatives since many are heavier than she can hold and manipulate. To make exploration of the materials easier for Raelle, Ms. Tisha has sorted out lighter and thicker manipulatives that may be easier for Raelle to explore. Ms. Tisha sits beside Raelle and offers her a fabric covered rattle, which Raelle is able to grasp and hold.

The teachers have realized that they need their breaks to care for their needs and relax. They decided not to use that time to clean and sanitize materials as they did before. They still have lots of toys to wash, but there are fewer since they don’t put out all of the toys every day. The teachers acknowledge that they may have to take more time during their closing duties to clean, but recognize this is an important task that must be done.
I Know I Should...Go Outside More Often

Watch

Ms. Noreen and Mr. Miguel are care teachers in a multi-age classroom with children ranging from infants through 36 months. Twice a day the toddlers, and the younger children that can walk, go outside for play. The teachers see how much the children enjoy the freedom to move about. This also helps the children burn off some of their energy in ways that also support their muscle development, coordination and balance. The teachers also know the children are experiencing different things than they would inside, for instance when they see a bug crawling on the ground, a flock of birds flying overhead or catch a glimpse of a bus or fire engine driving down the street. Even so, the teachers feel that the infants won’t get as much out of the outdoor experiences since they can’t move about so they rarely take them outside. Also, the weather seems to be too hot, too cold or too windy for the infants, who seem more vulnerable to the outdoor elements.

This morning Mr. Miguel takes the toddlers outside. Ms. Noreen is going to stay inside with the infants since it is sunny and quite warm out. She is afraid the infants will get too hot. In order to stay in ratio, a couple of mobile infants will have to stay indoors too. The other mobile infants will go outside with Mr. Miguel. The teachers will be sure that the mobile infants that stay indoors in the morning will go outside this afternoon. Charlotte, 15 months, looks out the window watching the other children play while banging on the glass. Ms. Noreen calls to her, “Charlotte, come over here and get a puzzle.” Charlotte doesn’t move. Ms. Noreen takes a few minutes to clean up the room while Lilly, 5 months, and Oliver, 3 months, are lying under a floor gym. Lilly bats at the hanging objects and Oliver occasionally watches the objects, but he can’t make them move.

“Playing outside gives me important sensory experiences that are different from playing inside.”

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Frequent opportunities for outdoor play enable children to learn about themselves, what they can do, what they want to do, and what they feel, see, hear and smell. Outdoor time also provides them with the opportunity to experience cause and effect relationships in nature, for example, by seeing and hearing wind blowing the leaves off of a tree or the sun warming their face. Children’s experiences with nature in the outside environment give teachers many opportunities to build language skills and begins to lay the foundation for science concepts by helping children to group and categorize elements around them. It is important to remember that taking children on buggy rides should not be used to replace outside playtime and restricting children’s movements outdoors by placing them in seats or other infant equipment does not provide the learning opportunities and experiences they need for healthy development.
Ask Yourself
• How does weather play a role in deciding about going outside?
• What are the benefits of outdoor time for infants?

Give It a Try
› Consider it is best practice to take all children outside twice a day, unless there is active rain, snow or a public health advisory.
› Determine how long to stay outside by monitoring infants’ needs and comfort.
› Dress children and yourself appropriately for the weather.
★ Recognize that outdoor play provides an exciting environment for infants to use their senses to explore and make discoveries. Sounds, sights, and smells the child experiences are quite different outdoors than indoors. Even the feeling of touch with the wind and sun on the infant’s face provides interesting sensory experiences.
★ Be aware that exposure to outdoor environments supports children’s physical health. Fresh air and sunlight are important to an infant’s overall health, even when the child is ill. Of course, always follow the doctor’s advice.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
• What strategies will help with providing outdoor time for infants?

Give It a Try
› Offer typical indoor experiences outdoors. For example, infants can use rattles, sensory materials, other manipulatives and equipment designed for motor play such as floor gyms.
› Go outside twice a day. The amount of time spent outside doesn’t have to be the same for morning and afternoon outdoor play.
› Have all items ready to take outside before dressing the children.
› Lay infants on blankets for comfort. Avoid thick blankets that could pose a suffocation hazard.
› Provide shade for all the children’s comfort.
› Place infants where they can see their peers, but be sure they are a safe distance from motor equipment.
★ Move infants during outside time. Let children lie down, sit in your lap and carry them around the environment to expose them to different sights and sounds. Avoid restricting children by using equipment that limits movement.
★ Talk to infants about what they see, hear, smell and feel.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Noreen and Mr. Miguel are care teachers in a multi-age classroom with children ranging from infants through 36 months. Twice a day, the teachers take all the children outside for play. They prepared a container of infant toys earlier this morning for today’s outdoor play. They place the container and blankets by the door before getting the children ready.

Once outside, the teachers place the blankets near the building which provides the only shade. The teachers can still supervise the outdoor play area from this location. Mr. Miguel holds Lilly, 5 months, as he walks around talking to the older children at play. He stops beside Charlotte, 15 months, who is squatting down on the sidewalk. “Charlotte what did you find?” asks Mr. Miguel. Charlotte points to a daddy-long-legged spider crawling on the sidewalk. “You found a spider,” says Mr. Miguel. He places Lilly on the ground, supporting her so she can feel the grass. Then he squats down to talk with Charlotte. After a minute or two, Charlotte moves on to the push-car. Talking to Lilly, Mr. Miguel says, “Are you patting the grass? It is tickly.” Lilly glances at him when he talks then looks back down at the grass. Mr. Miguel pats it too, watching Lilly’s reaction. Picking Lilly up, they walk toward the toy vehicles some of the children are riding. As they walk, he notices the sun shining on her. “Does that sun feel warm? It feels good.” He grabs a blanket and puts it down in a safe spot, places Lilly on her stomach with a couple of toys in reach, and stands beside her while supervising both the toddlers at play and her.

Ms. Noreen is sitting on the blanket with Oliver and another mobile child who is interested in the toy container. Oliver is lying under the floor gym. He isn’t able to make the hanging objects move yet, but he is intently watching them swing in the wind. The floor gym is keeping his attention longer outside than it usually does inside. Ms. Noreen says, “The wind is making the toys swing. Can you feel it blowing on you?” Smiling, Oliver kicks his feet.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will comprehend the message of another’s communication.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the movements of his or her body in order to move and to interact with the environment.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the use of his or her hands, fingers and sight in order to manipulate objects in the environment.
Age Group: Infant

I Know I Should...Implement Primary Caregiving

Watch

Infant care teachers Ms. Kenley and Ms. Guiliana provide care for eight children ages 3 months to 12 months. Ms. Kenley and Ms. Guiliana take turns diapering, holding, rocking to sleep, and feeding the infants, but the pace is demanding.

There are times that they forget to communicate with each other and assume the other teacher took care of an infant’s need. Maci, 4 months, a typically calm and very easy baby to care for, cries for over a half hour. Ms. Kenley attempts to soothe her while struggling to understand what is wrong. She wonders if Ms. Guiliana fed her; she had not. Mr. Sanchez then arrives to take Pedro, 6 months, to the pediatrician for his well-baby check. In the business of the day the teachers forgot to get Pedro ready. He has a soiled diaper and his bottle isn’t prepared. Although Mr. Sanchez is patient while Ms. Kenley quickly changes Pedro and Ms. Guiliana warms his bottle, they know Mr. Sanchez is frustrated with the delay.

Realizing that their system is not working, the teachers develop a master schedule of what each child needs and when. After noticing that several children had similar schedules, the teachers decided to divide their duties by tasks. Ms. Kenley chooses to handle diapering and playing with the children. Ms. Guiliana agrees to feed the infants and prepare them for nap time. Three days into their plan, Ms. Guiliana is becoming overwhelmed. Sometimes she has three babies who want to eat or go to sleep at the same time. Ms. Kenley also becomes discouraged about changing diapers all day. She finds it gives her little time to play with the infants. The teachers are struggling to not keep children waiting too long to have their needs met.
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A primary care teacher is an early childhood professional with the education, training, and experience to support the learning, development, and nurturance of children birth to 36 months of age. The primary care teacher has the principal responsibility for providing and coordinating the care (including safety, health, development, learning and emotional well-being) of specific or assigned infants and toddlers and for building a partnership with the children’s families. Primary caregiving is not exclusive caregiving and works best when infant care teachers support each other as a team.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• What is the best method to ensure each infant’s routine and developmental needs are met?
• How can communication between teachers and between families and teachers be improved?

Give It a Try

◆ Create a primary caregiving system to best meet children’s needs. Primary care teachers build secure relationships with specific children, provide routine care, support their development and learning, and create partnerships with each child’s family.
◆ Acknowledge that primary caregiving is not exclusive to caring for “just your children.” It works best when teachers support each other as a team.
◆ Use caregiving routines to get to know the infants as individuals. Routine care is a prime opportunity to support development and to build and strengthen your relationship with the children.
◆ Record on a child’s daily record the time when each routine is completed and the details. This helps teachers plan, organize, and verify that care is completed.
◆ Communicate with co-teachers, verbally and by documentation, throughout the day. Take time to update co-teachers and break staff on changes in a child’s typical schedule/routine.
◆ Ask questions when in doubt.
◆ Have families complete a daily recording form to document children’s routines that happen before arrival at the program. Information should include changes in typical schedules/routines and notes for the teacher.
◆ Build a relationship with families based on respect and trust so information sharing is a natural part of your interactions.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• What are the benefits of primary caregiving?
• How can we work as a primary caregiving team?

Give It a Try

◆ Recognize that primary caregiving is caring for the whole child, not completing tasks. For example, a teacher focuses on the diapering needs of each child in her primary group and not on changing eight children’s diapers.
◆ Learning each child’s individual needs, temperament, likes/dislikes and development is simpler in primary caregiving. You learn the characteristics of a smaller group in depth and have fewer children to focus your care teaching on.
◆ Building and maintaining secure and respectful relationships supports each child’s emotional needs and lays the foundation for future learning. Primary care teachers enjoy a special connection with their primary care group.
◆ Ask for assistance when in need. Offer help when you see it is needed.
◆ Ask the primary care teacher how to respond sensitively and appropriately to a child from her primary group that needs care. Listen to her input and use it to match your response to the child’s needs.
◆ Prepare for busy times of the day by referring to the daily record to assess what care will soon be needed. For instance, prepare a bottle in anticipation of hunger. Provide for the child before she becomes upset and frustrated.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Infant care teachers Ms. Kenley and Ms. Guiliana provide care for eight children ages 3 months to 12 months. Understanding the importance of creating secure, respectful relationships with each child, the teachers practice primary caregiving. Ms. Kenley provides routine care and supports development through play and learning with the four infants assigned to her primary care group. Ms. Guiliana does the same for her primary care group of four infants.

To support their communication with the families, the teachers use a daily recording form. Families document when routine care was last completed before arriving at the program. Then the teachers complete the form while the child is at the program. This helps establish a two-way communication system with the family. Details of schedule changes or information to take note of are included on the record.

On arrival this morning Mr. Sanchez notes on the daily recording form that Pedro has a well-baby check with his pediatrician this afternoon. Mr. Sanchez will arrive at one o’clock to pick up Pedro and would like him to be ready to go. After Mr. Sanchez drops off Pedro, Ms. Kenley reviews Pedro’s daily record. She sees the note and highlights it as a reminder. When co-teacher Ms. Guiliana arrives, Ms. Kenley tells her about Pedro’s appointment so both are aware of the schedule change.

In reviewing the daily records, Ms. Guiliana notices that Maci, 4 months, didn’t drink much of her morning bottle at home and realizes she may be hungry earlier than usual. Miley, 3 months, will most likely want her bottle right on time, which will be about when Maci will now want her bottle. Miley can become agitated quickly when she is hungry while Maci is more easy-going. Ms. Guiliana makes a note to prepare the bottles slightly ahead of schedule to be ready for the girls. As the primary care teacher of Maci and Miley, Ms. Guiliana knows the temperament and schedules of each girl and feels a deep connection to both of them. Because of her awareness and goodness of fit with the children, Ms. Guiliana prevents what could be a frustrating time for them and has a more calm and meaningful experience.

Ms. Kenley glances at the clock and realizes she needs to start getting Pedro ready for his father’s arrival. She warms his bottle and changes his diaper. While she is caring for Pedro, Susan, 5 months, wakes from her nap and fusses. Noticing that Ms. Kenley is busy, Ms. Guiliana asks her what she might do to help. Ms. Kenley asks her to change Susan’s diaper and then place her next to the mirror under the musical gym. Ms. Kenley tells Ms. Guiliana that Susan likes to be sung to during her diaper change. Mr. Sanchez arrives and Pedro is ready. When Mr. Sanchez and Pedro leave, Ms. Kenley thanks Ms. Guiliana for her help.

Physical Health:
The child will have access to care from a primary health provider, regardless of economic status and geographic location.

Emotional Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her internal states and feelings as well as stimulation from the outside world.
I Know I Should…Individualize Routines

At eight thirty in the morning Raoul, 6 months, and his father, Mr. Garcia arrive at Ms. Carla’s family child care home. Ms. Carla greets them and takes Raoul from his father. She holds him and helps him say good-bye at the door. Ms. Carla then straps Raoul in a bouncy seat. Soon he begins to fuss. After a minute, he starts to cry and before long he is screaming and arching his back.

Ms. Carla picks him up and tries to comfort him. She puts him up on her shoulder and pats his back. Raoul continues to cry. She walks to the window and starts talking to him about the leaves on the tree. Nothing seems to work. Knowing he may be hungry she says, “It isn’t time to eat yet. You have to wait until nine o’clock to eat. It is too early.” Raoul continues to cry, obviously distraught.

A few minutes before nine Ms. Carla lays a crying Raoul on the floor so he can play with the musical floor gym while she prepares his bottle. As she picks him up she says, “Now, now. Here is your bottle right on time.” Raoul quickly settles down and seems content.
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Feeding not only satisfies physical hunger, it can nourish a child in many ways. A child’s emotional experiences are enhanced through increased feelings of security and acceptance, increased attachment (the relationship formed between a child and a consistent care teacher), and an overall sense of well-being. Feeding is a time for infants to interact with adults and peers; and it’s a time to develop socially. A feeding time rich with language helps infants learn to communicate and more actively participate in their world. This type of care is most effective when feeding is carried out by a responsive, respectful teacher who has a close relationship with the child, engages in reciprocal communication, and who considers the child’s individual traits, temperament, family practices, and culture. Responsive teachers read the “signs” and cues that infants use to communicate their needs and then act in a way that meets each child’s immediate needs.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- What is the best way to meet an infant’s routine needs?
- What can I do to make communication with the family work well?

Give It a Try
▲ Practice responsive, respectful, and reciprocal care teaching. Read the “signs” or cues that Raoul is communicating to express his needs and interests. Then act in a way that meets his immediate needs or matches his interest.
◆ Consider Raoul’s individual needs, temperament, personal schedule, likes and dislikes, and decide how you can best provide care.
◆ Record on a child’s daily record the time when each routine is completed and the details. This helps teachers plan, organize, and verify that care is completed.
◆ Track changes in routines by comparing daily records. You can also create a separate feeding log to note times Raoul is expressing hunger, feeding times and amount fed.
◆ Prepare for the busy times of the day by referring to the daily record and assessing what care will soon be needed. For instance, prepare a bottle in anticipation of hunger. Provide for the child before he becomes upset and frustrated.
◆ Adapt to Raoul’s schedule. Feed Raoul when he shows signs of hunger. Avoid requiring him to wait until the scheduled feeding time.
▲ Build a relationship with the family based on respect and trust so information sharing is a natural part of your interactions.
▲ Partner with families on feeding issues.
◆ Have each family complete a daily recording form to document each child’s routines that occur before arrival at the program. Information should include changes in typical schedule/routine and notes for the teacher.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- What can I do at feeding time to support Raoul’s relationship with me?
- What do I need to do to make sure feeding time is safe and healthy for infants?

Give It a Try
◆ Use caregiving routines to get to know the infants as individuals. Routine care is a prime opportunity to support development and to build and strengthen your relationship.
◆ Use feeding time to interact individually with children. Talk to Raoul in a soothing, relaxed tone. Tell him what you are doing. This builds trust as well as language skills.
▲ Provide a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere for Raoul’s meal. Give him plenty of time to finish drinking his bottle at his own pace.
◆ Practice healthy and safe habits for feeding. Follow procedures outlined in the most recent edition of Caring for Our Children – Health and Safety Standards to maintain a safe and healthy food preparation/feeding/eating environment, safe and healthy bottle preparation, and to conduct appropriate feeding and correct handwashing procedures for both you and Raoul.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

At eight thirty in the morning Raoul, 6 months, and his father, Mr. Garcia arrive at Ms. Carla's family child care home. Ms. Carla greets Raoul and his father. She asks Mr. Garcia if Raoul has eaten recently. Mr. Garcia tells Ms. Carla that Raoul ate earlier than he usually does and may be getting hungry. Ms. Carla makes a note on his daily sheet and then comments, “It seems like Raoul is starting to get hungry earlier than his usual nine o’clock feeding time. Is this true at home?” Mr. Garcia agrees and tells her that lately Raoul has wanted more to eat. Ms. Carla makes another note on an individual chart she has been keeping. While Mr. Garcia puts Raoul’s personal things away, Ms. Carla decides to prepare his bottle anticipating that Raoul will be ready to eat in the next few minutes.

Ms. Carla helps Raoul say good-bye, then takes him to wash his hands. She wets his hands, dabs on a little liquid soap, and rubs them gently together saying in a sing-song voice, “We have to rub, rub, rub with soap. Rub the top, the bottom and all your fingers. Your hands are soapy and slippery. Now let’s rinse them off.” She rinses his hands under the running water and dries them with a paper towel. She settles Raoul on a blanket on the floor while she washes and dries her own hands.

As she gets his bottle she hears Raoul fuss a little. It sounds like his warm-up cry before he gets hungry. Ms. Carla says, “I hear you, Raoul. I think you are hungry and I am getting your bottle.” Once she has everything she needs, they settle into a rocking chair located in the learning/play area of her home child care setting. Ms. Carla can supervise and interact with the three other children she cares for while feeding and talking to Raoul.

Raoul drinks as Ms. Carla gently rocks him and gazes into his eyes. She says, “You were hungry. Does that taste good?” About halfway through the bottle Ms. Carla says, “It is just about time for a break, Raoul. I need to see if there is a little burp in you.” After a long pause she gently pulls on the bottle and says, “Now it is time for that burp.” She softly pulls the nipple from Raoul’s mouth and sits him up in her lap to burp. After a couple of rubs, she repeats the hand motions with a soft pat. Raoul finally lets out the burp and Ms. Carla says, “That was a big burp. I think there is room for the rest of your bottle.” Raoul immediately settles back into Ms. Carla’s arms, reaches toward the bottle, and continues to drink.

When Raoul finishes eating Ms. Carla burps him again and says, “Now, let’s wash your hands and my hands and get you some rattles to shake.”

Physical Health
The child will be exposed to and assisted with frequent and proper handwashing.

Emotional Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her internal states and feelings, as well as stimulation from the outside world.
Welcome to South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide

Get the Complete Field Guide Online – Including These ADDITIONAL Sections:

**Introduction** (Sets the stage for understanding and using the Field Guide)
- What is the Field Guide
- Using the Field Guide
- Details of Vignette Layout
- Acknowledgments
- Glossary
- Library of Resources
- References
- Vignette Table of Contents
- “More About” Listing
- Out of the Mouths of Babes
- Create Your Own Vignette

**Infant Vignettes (Birth to 8 Months)**

**Toddler Vignettes (16 to 36 Months)**

Visit [www.scpitc.org](http://www.scpitc.org) to download any and all sections of the Infant & Toddler Field Guide.

**Create Your Own Vignette**

Do you have a real-life situation that you would like to address? The “Create Your Own Vignette” Template provides you with the opportunity by taking you through the “Watch,” “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” and “Putting It All Together” process. You can create questions, strategies and possible resolutions by using the blank vignette template found in the Field Guide Introduction Section.

**Mobile Infant 6 to 18 Months**

These vignettes capture a moment in time in child care programs based on real-life challenges. The vignettes enable you to “see” and “hear” children and care teachers during play, learning, and caregiving routines and the interactions involved. After reading a vignette, the reader walks through a series of questions and possible teaching strategy solutions. These strategies are then woven into a final “Putting It All Together” vignette depicting a more developmentally appropriate child-teacher encounter.

- Vignette Table of Contents
- Details of Vignette Layout
- Mobile Infant Vignettes (6 to 18 Months)
In each vignette you can “see” and “hear” mobile infants and their care teachers in action. Choose a vignette topic and turn to the page in the Mobile Infant section that you want to explore.

### Vignette Table of Contents

#### Mobile Infant: 6 to 18 Months

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#### South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide

Download these age sections at www.scpitc.org.

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**Want to Explore the Infant and Toddler Vignettes?**

**Age Group:** Infant: Birth to 8 Months

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Some Vignette Topics Are Not Available for Certain Age Groups

While a majority of topics are presented in each of the three age groups, there are a few topics that are not. Some topics are not suitable for the age group represented, due either to the developmental stages of children or the appropriateness of the experience. For example, there are no vignettes on “Getting Them Ready for Preschool” for the infant and mobile infant age groups since directed school readiness activities are inappropriate for this age group.

Use of Screen Time (TV/DVD/Video/Computer)

Hands-on opportunities in appropriate environments require children to use their sense of smell, touch, sight, hearing, and sometimes taste. These opportunities also involve the use of motor, cognitive, and emotional skills and often language and social skills, which are not utilized in passive screen time activities.

For this reason and following the national recommendations and the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the use of TVs/DVDs/videos/computers is not appropriate for children under the age of 24 months in any circumstance. It is best practice, and the Field Guide’s recommendation, not to use any screen time experiences with children under the age of 36 months.
Each vignette is laid out similarly. Understanding each section will help you get the most out of the Field Guide.

What You’ll Find on Page 1 of Each Vignette

Watch

“Watch,” the initial vignette, sets up an example of a real-life situation that a care teacher may experience. The care teacher’s professional practices illustrated in the “Watch” vignette are not “wrong” but rather are practices that could be strengthened.

Child’s Quote

The child’s quote on the “Watch” page is “Out of the Mouth of Babes.” The child is telling the reader what her needs are based on the ideas portrayed in the vignette. The development team titled this piece “One Thing Right Now”; the one thing we would like the reader to consider right now.

So Aggressive...With Others

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him; then he is off again.

Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole’s baby doll. Then she reaches to take the bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ‘Nita, my bottle,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita before pedaling off again. Ms. Alix repeats what she had just said, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at her, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

When she catches up with Keeton, Ms. Alix kneels in front of the trike and stops him. She takes his hand, gently pulls him off of the trike, and walks him to the cozy area. “I told you to go to the cozy area. Sit here until you can listen to my words.” She sits him down and hands him a book. Keeton throws the book on the floor and kicks it with his foot. Ms. Alix takes him by the hand and says, “Keeton, you are hurting your friends and destroying the books. You’ll have to stay with me until you can listen to my words and do what you are supposed to do.” For the rest of play time, Ms. Alix holds Keeton’s hand and takes him with her as she goes about her duties.

Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.
What You’ll Find on Page 2 of Each Vignette

**Watch**

The “Watch” vignette is presented again so readers can drill down, “observe” and focus on what the child is experiencing. Revisiting the “scene” helps readers more clearly identify and clarify what is happening in the vignette. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the connection between interactions, environment, development and behaviors. The “Watch” vignette directly links to the next section found on page 3 of each vignette, “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try.”

**More About… impulse control**

Impulse control is an essential part of a child’s developing emotion regulation and self-regulation. It starts developing in infancy and continues throughout the preschool years. A child in the process of learning impulse control can be challenging for an adult. A young toddler may only occasionally comply with a teacher’s expectations. An older toddler is likely to express understanding of some boundaries, but may not yet have developed enough self-control to attend to them consistently. Being patient with the learning process is key. With appropriate supervision, guidance, and support from responsive care teachers, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.
Details of Vignette Layout

What You’ll Find on Page 3 of Each Vignette

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- Why doesn’t Keeton follow my directions?
- Whose needs should I attend to in this situation, Keeton’s or Eliza’s?

Give It a Try
- Help Keeton develop impulse control by stopping him from hurting others, encouraging him to follow social rules, and ensuring his needs will be met if he waits. Young toddlers, like Keeton, will likely not have the same ability to control their behavior as older toddlers.
- Respond promptly to Eliza so she knows you are concerned about her. Validate her feelings and encourage her to tell Keeton not to hurt her again.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- Why did Juanita take Cole’s doll and baby bottle, instead of getting her own doll and baby bottle?
- How can I help Juanita and Cole learn to play together and reduce conflict?

Give It a Try
- Recognize that toddlers are all about “Me” and often seek instant gratification. They want “What they want, when they want it.” As children develop, they observe teacher modeling and learn how to solve problems.
- Provide duplicate popular toys to reduce fights over scarce resources. Let Juanita know that there are plenty of baby dolls. Show her where they are.
- Play with children. Children will learn how to play with peers by playing with you.
- Help children solve their problems by encouraging them to create solutions together. Accept their ideas for resolution, help them try out solutions.
- When conflict occurs over possession of toys, hold the contested items in your hands during the brief resolution process. It takes the focus off whose toy it is and keeps the focus on the problem-solving process. Ensure children get toys back when the problem is resolved.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
- Why doesn’t Keeton understand the danger of riding the trike around the room?
- How do I help Keeton comply with this important safety guideline?

Give It a Try
- Recognize that toddlers test boundaries and have not internalized adult rules, expectations and the possible consequences of unsafe behavior. Stay close to Keeton to help him comply with your expectations.
- Keep in mind Keeton’s level of development when creating the environment and expectations.
- Create an environmental solution to the problem. Design a barrier or some visual separation between the trike area and other activity areas. Consider using painter’s tape on the floor, traffic cones, or low shelf units as dividers.
- Encourage Keeton to stay inside the designated trike area by complimenting him when he does and by redirecting him if he doesn’t. Follow through and help him put the trike away and find something else to do if he isn’t able to keep it in the trike area.

Give It a Try Key:
The bullet point icons identify the “Give It a Try” professional practices that refer to teacher interaction (▲), environment & materials (●), child development & interest (★) and caregiving routine (●).

Ask Yourself
The “Ask Yourself” questions, written in the reader’s voice, align to specific paragraphs in the “Watch” vignette. This enables you to consider questions that directly relate to child behaviors and professional practices. This approach of reviewing a scenario and asking questions is part of the reflective process.

Give It a Try
“Give It a Try” presents possibilities to strengthen your professional practices, increase your knowledge and to reflect on your ideas and beliefs. Be open to trying new ideas and seeing what works and what doesn’t. The suggested professional practices are options and do not represent a complete list. They do, however, illustrate essential professional practices that support the provision of relationship-based care that is responsive, respectful and reciprocal.

The “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” strategy is based on The Program for Infant/Toddler Care’s Watch, Ask, and Adapt; a process that utilizes the skills of observation, reflection and application to support care teaching.
Putting It All Together

The “Putting It All Together” vignette is an expansion of the original “Watch” vignette and shows how the scenario might be different when the practices recommended in the “Ask Yourself” and “Give It a Try” are carried out. Of course, there is not one solution and there are many factors to take into consideration. What we do know is that knowledgeable, responsive, respectful and reciprocal care leads to meaningful, early experiences that last a lifetime.

Infant & Toddler Guidelines Connections

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines provide definitions and examples of infant and toddler development in six developmental domains from birth to 36 months. Each of the six developmental domains is represented with an icon that relates to the type of development described in the domain.

The Guidelines’ icons, in the “Putting It All Together” section, connect a child’s behavior/interaction with some of the six developmental domains and the Guidelines’ indicator it represents. Though only one to three of the Guidelines’ icons are aligned with a behavior in the “Putting It All Together” vignette, more developmental behaviors and connections can be identified throughout.

The Guidelines’ Icons in the Vignette Highlight:

- How children’s experiences directly relate to their development.
- How experiences can be intentional and unintentional and still affect development.
- How teachers should take advantage of opportunities and everyday encounters to support children’s development; it isn’t something extra teachers must do.
- How different developmental domains do not operate separately, but instead are inextricably woven together and are part of every care teaching decision you make.
Family child care teacher, Ms. Kelly, is on the floor reading a book to 18-month-old Rose when Mr. Mitchell arrives with 12-month-old Trace. Ms. Kelly turns around and greets Mr. Mitchell as he puts Trace’s bottles in the refrigerator. He kisses Trace good-bye and places him on the floor. Ms. Kelly says, “Have a good day,” as he hurries out of the room. Trace watches his father leave and begins to whimper.

Ms. Kelly greets Trace and asks, “Why don’t you crawl over and join us? We are looking at a book.” Trace’s crying intensifies as he continues to look toward the door. Ms. Kelly affectionately says, “You’re OK Trace, come join Rose and me.” Trace cries even harder. Ms. Kelly leaves Rose and goes over to pick up Trace repeating, “You’re OK, dad will be back. Let’s get a tissue.” Trace continues to whimper and cries on and off for the next 30 minutes.

"I need everyone who cares for me to slow down and be patient with me as I warm up."
Family child care teacher, Ms. Kelly, is on the floor reading a book to 18-month-old Rose when Mr. Mitchell arrives with 12-month-old Trace. Ms. Kelly turns around and greets Mr. Mitchell as he puts Trace’s bottles in the refrigerator. He kisses Trace good-bye and places him on the floor. Ms. Kelly says, “Have a good day,” as he hurries out of the room. Trace watches his father leave and begins to whimper.

Ms. Kelly greets Trace and asks, “Why don’t you crawl over and join us? We are looking at a book.” Trace’s crying intensifies as he continues to look toward the door. Ms. Kelly affectionately says, “You’re OK Trace, come join Rose and me.” Trace cries even harder. Ms. Kelly leaves Rose and goes over to pick up Trace repeating, “You’re OK, dad will be back. Let’s get a tissue.” Trace continues to whimper and cries on and off for the next 30 minutes.

Due to their developmental stage, mobile infants may experience trouble separating from their parent, even though as younger infants they didn’t display distress. Around six months of age infants begin to distinguish strangers and may fear them. Though you may not feel like a stranger to the infant, the infant may still have difficulty transitioning into your care. Around nine months of age mobile infants usually begin to develop separation anxiety; they have a strong preference for their mother, father, family member or other adult who is their primary caregiver. It is essential for a young child’s emotional development that in times of stress her care teacher provides physical comfort in a warm and soothing manner, is flexible, patient and empathetic.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why does Trace cry when he is dropped off?
• What impact do Mr. Mitchell’s actions have on Trace?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that Trace is at the age to show separation anxiety. Crying is his way of expressing that he misses his father. Crying at drop-off doesn’t necessarily mean that he dislikes his care teacher or the program.
▲ Invite Mr. Mitchell to stay and help Trace with the transition. Family members may not know they are welcome to stay or are encouraged to help their child get ready for the separation.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What can I do to help Trace separate from his father?
• What will help Trace get over feeling sad after his father is gone?

Give It a Try
◆ Warmly greet Mr. Mitchell and Trace at the door upon arrival. Converse briefly with Mr. Mitchell to not only gain health and safety information, but to also prepare Trace for separation.
◆ Help families establish consistent and predictable separation and reunion routines. Encourage Mr. Mitchell to use the same routine every day to make it predictable.
◆ Help Trace separate by holding him while he says good-bye to his father and encourage his father to say good-bye too. Stay close, acknowledge and validate Trace’s sadness and offer comforting words.
▲ Be sure to respond empathetically to children in distress. Don’t expect Trace to come to you, particularly when he is upset. Go to him.
▲ Offer a favorite comfort item or a family photo to help Trace cope with the separation. Assure him you will take care of him until his family picks him up.
Family child care teacher, Ms. Kelly, and 18-month-old Rose are sitting in the cozy area reading a book. Twelve-month-old Trace arrives in his father’s arms. When Ms. Kelly sees them, she hands Rose the book and tells her, “I’m going to say hi to Trace and his dad. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Ms. Kelly meets Trace and his dad at the door and says, “Hi Trace, I am glad you are here,” and then, “Good morning, Mr. Mitchell.” Ms. Kelly asks Mr. Mitchell about Trace’s night and morning. He mentions that he will not be able to stay and read a book to Trace this morning as he has an early appointment. During the conversation, Ms. Kelly watches Trace and looks for cues about how to help him transition to her care. Ms. Kelly notices Trace looking back and forth between his dad and her. She wonders if this means Trace is getting ready to separate from dad. She says to Trace, “In a couple of minutes, dad will leave. When he does, I’ll be here to hold you and help you say good-bye.”

Dad says, “Trace, I need to go to work. Ms. Kelly will take care of you while I am gone.” He gives Trace a hug, a kiss and gently hands Trace to Ms. Kelly. Trace whimpers and reaches for dad. Dad strokes his ear and says, “I’ll be back to get you after your last nap. I love you. Good-bye.” Mr. Mitchell waves good-bye and leaves. Trace starts to cry and looks for dad at the door. Ms. Kelly says, “Dad went to work. I know you are sad. It’s hard when he leaves. He will be back.” She pats him gently on the back as he cuddles to her.

Holding Trace, Ms. Kelly goes to the family picture wall and points to and talks about Trace’s family. She takes the picture off the wall and offers it to Trace to hold. Next, she retrieves a favorite stuffed dog from his cubby, which he eagerly cuddles tight. His crying continues.

Ms. Kelly asks Trace if he wants to look at a book with Rose. Still sad, Trace looks at Rose in the cozy area. Ms. Kelly notices Trace’s interest in Rose, so they join her. Ms. Kelly continues to hold Trace while he clings to his stuffed dog and the picture of his family. Ms. Kelly tells Rose that Trace is sad because his dad left and that reading a book may help Trace feel better. Ms. Kelly asks Rose to show Trace a picture in the book she is holding. Trace sniffs and takes a quick look. He snuggles with Ms. Kelly, occasionally whimpers, and begins to look at the book more intently.
Mason, 16 months, is having a difficult time transitioning to his child care program today. Mason has been in Mr. Matt’s room for several months; some days he transitions better than other days. Today, he cried and clung to his mom as she said good-bye. Mr. Matt, his care teacher, held and rocked him until he calmed. Mr. Matt checks the family’s notes on the daily record; Mason ate his usual breakfast and his home schedule was typical, though he had a fitful night.

Mr. Matt settles Mason into the construction area with the blocks, then plays with the other children in the dramatic play area. While playing, Arun, 20 months, accidently bumps into Mason. Mason falls apart, crying loudly for several minutes. Mr. Matt calls from the dramatic play area, “Are you all right, Mason? Arun didn’t mean to bump you. Come play with us.” Mason looks at Mr. Matt but stays put. Mr. Matt stays with the children in the dramatic play area.

Later, Mr. Matt informs Mason it is time to go outside and that he needs to put the blocks away. Mason cries with rage at having to leave the blocks he is stacking. Mr. Matt gently takes him by the hand and walks him outside. Once outside, Mason calms and spends most of his time sitting in the sand box watching the other children play. When Mr. Matt sings the clean up song, Mason screams, “No!” and immediately begins to cry. Mason is inconsolable as he is carried inside.

At lunch, Mason whimpers and picks at his food. He cries when he is put down for nap; he falls into a fitful sleep. Upon waking, he refuses a snack. Fussing, Mason plops down on the cushions in the cozy area. Mr. Matt notices and checks on him. He doesn’t appear to have a temperature and shows no other signs of illness. Mr. Matt tries to coax Mason into playing and brings over a box of bracelets. Mason shoves it aside and says, “No.” Mr. Matt lets him remain where he is. Mason plays in the cozy area by himself until his father arrives a few minutes later.

Some days it’s harder to move from one thing to the next. I need extra time to get ready.
Mason, 16 months, is having a difficult time transitioning to his child care program today. Mason has been in Mr. Matt’s room for several months; some days he transitions better than other days. Today, he cried and clung to his mom as she said good-bye. Mr. Matt, his care teacher, held and rocked him until he calmed. Mr. Matt checks the family’s notes on the daily record; Mason ate his usual breakfast and his home schedule was typical, though he had a fitful night.

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Children are born with specific temperaments that affect how they respond and react to situations, people and the environment. Like children, we are also influenced by our temperament, but by drawing upon our life experiences and combining that with our ability to regulate our behavior, we are better able to deal with changes in our schedules and the environment. By understanding whether a child’s temperament is flexible, cautious or feisty, and by implementing care teaching strategies that support different temperament types, you can be responsive to children’s needs and help transitions go more smoothly for everyone.
Give It a Try

s

Teacher Interaction
H
Child Development & Interest
w
Environment & Materials
u
Caregiving Routine

Put It All Together

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• Why is Mason having a harder than usual time transitioning this morning?
• Why is Mason so sensitive to being bumped by Arun?
• What does Mason need from me?

Give It a Try

★ Acknowledge that children’s behavior is a reflection of their feelings. Mason may be showing sensitivity to slight changes in his routine and environment.

★ Consider that each child’s sensitivities and reactions are unique. Recognize that a physical exchange between peers doesn’t have to result in injury for a child to be upset.

▲ Comfort Mason when he is upset. Stay close, offering a transitional item such as a blanket. Offer comforting words, validate his emotions and gently rub his back. If he will accept it, hold him until he calms.

◆ Design play areas that accommodate multiple children. Provide guidance to help them navigate the play space, communicating where to sit and stand.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• Why is Mason having difficulties with the transitions throughout the day?
• What can I do to help Mason transition from one activity to another?

Give It a Try

★ Consider how Mason’s temperament might be contributing to his responses.

▲ Research types of temperaments, their characteristics and effective care teaching strategies. Complete a temperament assessment for Mason and modify teaching strategies to improve Mason’s experience.

★ Allow children ample time to make transitions. Some children need more time than others.

◆ Tell Mason about upcoming transitions so he is prepared. Be prepared to patiently help Mason at transition time.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself

• I am concerned about Mason not eating or sleeping well. How should I handle this situation?
• How do I prepare Mason for the many transitions throughout the day?

Give It a Try

◆ Offer Mason healthy snacks and liquids throughout the day. He may not be hungry at scheduled meal times; it is important that he can eat/drink when hungry/thirsty. Allow Mason to rest based on his individual schedule.

◆ Record his food/liquid intake and rest times to get a clear picture of what Mason needs. Share concerns with his family.

▲ Observe and record Mason’s behavior before, during, and after transitions. Note what happens when he has easy, and difficult, transitions. Implement strategies based on observation findings.

▲ Share your observations of Mason’s transitions with his family; work together on coming up with ways to help Mason.

▲ Find resources that will help you identify different temperaments and learn how to best support children of different temperaments.

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Mr. Matt helps Mason settle into the block area, then plays with other children in the dramatic play area. While playing, Arun, 20 months, accidentally bumps into Mason. Mason falls apart, crying loudly for several minutes. Knowing Mason has high sensitivity to touch and experiences intense reactions, Mr. Matt goes to him quickly and comforts him. “You didn’t like it when your friend bumped into you. Let’s find a way to keep that from happening again.” He unrolls two small rugs and helps Mason transfer his blocks to one rug and Arun’s blocks to another. Mr. Matt engages them in play.

Mr. Matt, having assessed Mason’s temperament and determined that change is challenging for him, prepares him for transitions. He tells Mason, “It is almost time to go outside.” Mr. Matt stays close by him singing the clean up song. Mason starts crying but allows Mr. Matt to help him pick up the blocks and holds his hand as they walk outside. Mason spends most of his time in the sand box watching other children play. Mr. Matt asks if he would like to ride in the toy car. Mason shakes his head “no” but plays with the car a few minutes later. When it is almost time to go inside, Mr. Matt reminds Mason that the clean up song is coming. He screams, “No!” and immediately begins to cry. Mr. Matt gently says, “You don’t want to go inside, but it is almost time.” Mr. Matt sings, staying with Mason, helping him park the toy car and walk to the door.

Mr. Matt helps Mason wash his hands reminding him that lunch is next. During lunch, Mason whimpers and picks at his food. While washing hands after lunch, Mr. Matt tells Mason that he will read a story then it is nap time. Mason is fussy though he listens to the story and lays down for nap. Upon awaking, he refuses a snack. Whining, Mason plops down in the cozy area. Mr. Matt checks on him. He doesn’t appear to have a temperature and shows no signs of illness. Mr. Matt offers Mason a box of bracelets to play with. Mason shoves it aside and says, “No.” Mr. Matt says, “I’ll leave them here if you change your mind. I’m going to make music with the instruments; you can join us.” Mr. Matt visually checks on Mason; Mason is content and occasionally glances at Mr. Matt.

Later, Mr. Matt offers Mason a snack, which he wants. Mr. Matt doesn’t hurry Mason and allows him to wash his hands and eat his snack at his own pace. Mason returns to the cozy area playing with his box of bracelets and waits for his father to arrive.

After Mason’s reunion with his father, Mr. Matt shared Mason’s day with his father and asks how he helps Mason with transitions at home. His father shares strategies, including offering him his pacifier before asking him to transition and letting him hold his favorite truck during the car ride. Mr. Matt thanks him for his input and tells him he will try his ideas, already planning how he will offer Mason his pacifier before the clean up song and will arrange to let him take his truck outside.
Crying...For No Obvious Reason

Watch

It is almost time for Ms. Allison’s lunch break. She knows that Ethan, 14 months, Alejandra, 12 months, and Jazara, 10 months, will all cry when she leaves so she waits until all three are busy before slipping out the door. After she is gone about a minute, Jazara looks up from where she is playing with a ring tower and pauses with one ring in each hand. She looks around the room for Ms. Allison and starts screaming when she doesn’t find her.

Ms. Lola, the break teacher, comes over to Jazara and tries to comfort her. Jazara will have nothing to do with Ms. Lola so Ms. Lola goes over to help the other children. Jazara continues to whimper and cry for a while longer. Jazara becomes interested again in the ring tower and starts playing with it.

When Ms. Allison comes back in the room, she washes her hands and begins to pick up the classroom. Jazara sees her come and reaches her arms in the air and opens and closes her fists. Ms. Allison finishes putting toys away and takes the bin of mouthed toys to the sink. Jazara starts whimpering and then crying as she follows Ms. Allison with her eyes. Ethan and Alejandra notice Ms. Allison too. Alejandra crawls over to Ms. Allison and follows her as she does her tasks. Ethan stares at Ms. Allison without moving or responding. When Ms. Allison is finished at the sink, she sits down by Jazara who is still crying. Ms. Allison picks Jazara up and seats her in her lap.

“\nI am attached to you so letting me know about your comings and goings is helpful.\n”
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Infants’ and toddlers’ foundation for development is the secure relationships they develop with their parent(s) and care teachers. This secure relationship is referred to as an attachment. Attachment is the process of affection, bonding and connectedness between an infant and toddler and a significant care teacher or parent that builds a sense of trust and security within the child. It profoundly affects all areas of development. Studies on attachment show that children who are in emotionally secure relationships early in life are more likely to be self-confident and socially competent. Sensitive care teachers who read the children’s cues and meet emotional and physical needs help each child become securely attached to them – which benefits the child in so many ways!
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction
★ = Child Development & Interest
◆ = Environment & Materials
◆◆ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• Why do the children cry every time I leave the room?
• If Jazara cries whether I say good-bye or not, what is the best way for me to leave?
• How does Ms. Lola feel about me leaving without saying good-bye?

Give It a Try

★ Learn about how attachment relationships grow. Understand the stages of attachment, the behaviors of each stage, and effective teaching responses during each stage.
△ Consider how it feels to the child to look up and not find her care teacher. Always tell children good-bye when you leave the classroom. Remind them that you will be back.
◆ Consider the impact of your departure on both the children you leave behind and the teacher who must care for them. Just as it is helpful for you to know when your colleagues are leaving, so too is it helpful for children to be able to anticipate a change.
◆ Ease the transition by having the break teacher spend a few minutes in the room before you leave. Talk about what each child may need while you are gone.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• How can I help Ms. Lola comfort Jazara while I am out of the room?
• What does Jazara want of me when I come back in the room? What do her hand motions mean?
• Why are Alejandra and Ethan watching me so closely? Don’t they know I have to get my work done?

Give It a Try

◆ Provide a consistent care teacher to be with the children when the primary care teacher is on break. Share how each child likes to be comforted and where their security objects (blanket, pacifier) are stored.
△ Respond to children’s non-verbal signals. Immediately after returning from a break or absence, go to Jazara and acknowledge her interest in reconnecting with you.
◆ Recognize the feelings Alejandra is communicating by crawling toward you. Return Ethan’s gaze and show him you have noticed that he is looking at you. Remind the children that you came back, just like you said you would.
◆ Talk to the children when you return to the classroom if you are unable to be physically close to them immediately. Tell them you will be there to say hello as soon as you can.
★ Pay attention to facial expressions and gestures as well as the children’s cries and other vocalizations. Try to figure out what the children are trying to communicate.
It is almost time for Ms. Allison’s lunch break. She knows that Ethan, 14 months, Alejandra, 12 months, and Jazara, 10 months, will all likely notice when she leaves. So 10 minutes before her break, she spends a few minutes playing with Jazara. When Jazara looks up at her, Ms. Allison says, “You are playing with the ring tower – there are two rings on it and you are ready to put the third one on.” She watches Jazara add the final ring and says, “You did it.” Then, she gets Jazara’s attention and says, “In 10 minutes, it will be time for my break. When I leave, Ms. Lola will be here to take care of you.” Jazara looks at Ms. Allison and her chin begins to quiver. Ms. Allison says, “I know it is hard when I leave, but I will come back.” Then she hands Jazara another ring for the tower. After Jazara is busy playing again, she repeats the reminder with Ethan and Alejandra. Jazara looks at Ms. Allison and her chin begins to quiver. Ms. Allison says, “I know it is hard when I leave, but I will come back.” Then she hands Jazara another ring for the tower. After Jazara is busy playing again, she repeats the reminder with Ethan and Alejandra. Jazara follows her with her eyes and starts crying. Ms. Allison comes back over to Jazara and says, “I am not leaving now. I will leave in 5 more minutes. I can still play with you until it is time for Ms. Lola to take care of you.”

In a few minutes, Ms. Lola comes into the classroom and joins Ms. Allison on the floor with the three children. Ms. Allison briefs Ms. Lola on what each child will likely need while she is on her break. She then gets Jazara’s attention and says, “It is time for me to go. Ms. Lola is here and she has your blanket and lovey for you to hold if you need it. I’ll be back after my break.” Then she gets up, goes to the door, waves to Jazara, Ethan, and Alejandra. Jazara starts to cry immediately, and Ms. Lola is right there to offer her the blanket and lovey and to pick her up. After a couple of minutes, she calms down and is once again interested in the ring tower.

When Ms. Allison comes back into the classroom, she goes immediately over to Jazara and touches her gently on her back. “I came back, Jazara, just like I said I would.” She looks over at Alejandra, who is playing contentedly in the manipulative area, smiles, and waves. Then Ms. Allison and Ms. Lola exchange information about what happened while she was gone. Ms. Lola says that Ethan is taking a nap and that she has made notes on the daily sheet about when he went to sleep, what Jazara ate for lunch, and that she changed a soiled diaper for Alejandra. Ms. Lola says good-bye to Jazara and Alejandra as she leaves the classroom. When Ethan wakes up, Ms. Allison goes over to his crib, smiles at him, and says, “Hi there, sleepy boy. Ms. Lola told me you were having a nap. I came back from my break while you were asleep. Let’s get you up and see what your friends are doing.”

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize his or her ability to do things.

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize his or her own feelings.

Social Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.
Crying... Everyone at the Same Time

Watch 📽️

Ms. Heather is getting the children ready to go outside at her family child care program. Three preschoolers are dressed and standing by the door waiting. Ms. Heather is looking for Logan’s cold weather gear. Twins Josie and Jon, 12 months, still need their coats, hats, and gloves on, too. Logan, 16 months, walks toward Ms. Heather and accidentally steps on Jon’s fingers. Jon begins to cry. Josie hears her brother’s cries and starts to cry. Logan looks up at Ms. Heather and begins to whimper.

Ms. Heather turns to the infants and says, “You’re OK. We will be outside soon.” They continue to cry as Ms. Heather finally finds Logan’s jacket and hat and quickly dresses all three infants. She opens the door and lets the preschool children go out first, then helps Logan, Josie, and Jon out the door. The crying continues. Ms. Heather grabs the tissue box and starts wiping noses. As she wipes a nose, she tells each child that he or she is “OK,” and tells them to “go play.” Ms. Heather heads over to the climber, hoping some of the children will follow her and get distracted in the process.

Logan doesn’t move, but his crying slows to a few sniffles as he watches the older children at play. After a few minutes, he wanders over to the climber and goes up and down the slide. Josie and Jon sit in the grass where Ms. Heather left them and continue to cry. Ms. Heather sighs.

“Being prepared helps all of us, including you.”

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The shift from one activity or routine to another requires care teachers and children to be prepared so things go smoothly. Effective transitions require an intentional, systematic process to help a child move, emotionally and physically, from one place or activity to another. Planning and being prepared for all the steps in a transition will help you meet the individual children’s needs as well as the group’s needs. It will also help you maintain an organized system that will help you effectively care for the children in your program.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can I get all of the children ready to go outside in cold weather without some of the children having to wait so long?
• Why are all of the infants crying?

Give It a Try
△ Organize the children’s belongings in cubbies or small bins/baskets by the door so you do not have to spend time looking for lost coats, hats, etc.
★ Understand that young children become restless when having to wait. Keep them involved by singing a song, chanting a rhyme or looking at a basket of books.
▲ Recognize crying as an attempt to communicate. Validate children’s emotions so they know you understand how they feel. Comment on the situation. For example, say, “It is hard to wait for all the children to get their coats on to go outside.”

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What can I say or do to help children make the transition outdoors and stop crying?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that some children take longer to adjust to new activities, especially when upset. Comfort the children who are crying and stay close by to provide a sense of security.
▲ Allow children to select a favorite toy, such as a truck or book, to take outside to help ease the transition.
▲ Encourage children to become involved in activities, such as rolling a ball or climbing on the slide.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• Why do Josie and Jon continue to cry when I know they love to be outside?

Give It a Try
◆ Individualize routines to meet children’s differing needs for stimulation, rest, eating, diapering, etc. Allow the children who are ready to play to do so. If in a classroom, arrange supervision with your co-teacher to give children this choice.
◆ Give Josie and Jon individual attention to help them relax and to give them more time to feel comfortable in the new setting.
◆ Establish a regular and predictable routine for getting ready to go outside. Follow the same steps each time.
◆ Talk with children before and during routines and transitions. Use songs, rhymes or finger plays to fill downtime (wait time) during transitions.
Ms. Heather is getting the children at her family child care program ready to go outside. Ms. Heather knows having a predictable routine helps ensure that everyone can get ready to go outside without having to wait too long. Children’s jackets, hats, and gloves are kept in labeled bins by the back door.

Ms. Heather has the three preschoolers get ready first while she sings a song with the younger children, Logan, 16 months, and twins Josie and Jon, 12 months. When the preschoolers have their coats and hats on, she has each one bring her an infant jacket and help her dress the infants. Logan tires of waiting and starts to cry. Ms. Heather says, “It is hard to wait for all the children to get their coats on to go outside. Why don’t you pick a ball from the laundry basket by the door to take outside to the playground?” Logan toddles to the laundry basket and picks out a ball. The other children follow Logan as Ms. Heather holds Jon’s and Josie’s hands. Each child picks one toy from the basket before walking outside.

Once outside, the preschoolers run off to play on the climber. Logan holds onto his ball and watches the older children. Ms. Heather helps Jon and Josie sit down in the grass and turns to play ball with Logan. Logan tosses the ball to Ms. Heather and Ms. Heather rolls it back to him. Jon begins to cry. Knowing Jon has a hard time with changes in activities, Ms. Heather bends down and says, “I am right here. I am going to stay by you while I play ball with Logan.” She hands Jon a dump truck, his favorite toy. His crying stops as he becomes interested in pushing his truck. Soon, Logan tires of playing ball and rides the toddler trike. Ms. Heather sits down next to Jon and Josie and rolls the ball to them.
Tan, 10 months, is crawling around the room of his family child care teacher, Ms. Gloria, exploring everything in his pathway. He crawls to the table where Ms. Gloria is feeding Autumn, 7 months, and he pulls to a stand. He reaches for Autumn’s bowl of food while holding on tightly to the table. Ms. Gloria gently stops his hand and says, “No, no, Tan. This is Autumn’s food.” He lowers to his knees and crawls away.

Soon, Tan nears the diaper changing table. He again pulls to a stand, this time holding on to the trash can. He bangs his hand on the metal can, thoroughly enjoying the noise it makes. He looks over at Ms. Gloria who is busy feeding Autumn. Then he realizes the lid has a swinging door and tries to make the door swing. “Tan, that is dirty. Don’t touch.” Ms. Gloria moves him to the cozy area, hands him a book and returns to feeding Autumn.

No sooner than Ms. Gloria returns to feeding Autumn, Tan is once again on the move. This time he opens the door to the play refrigerator and tosses out all of the play food. “Tan, don’t empty that. It makes a big mess.” Ms. Gloria, frustrated that Tan is getting into everything and that she can’t feed Autumn without disruption, decides to wait until Autumn is through eating to clean up the mess.

"I am going to explore everything in my path, so make it safe and interesting for me."
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Mobile infants are driven to explore; that is how they learn. Young children are developing their ability to control their impulses and learn what is or is not safe and healthy. Also, they do not have the experience or knowledge to fully understand what is theirs and what isn’t. They think it all is meant for them. Creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for infants and toddlers is essential. Any item that could pose a potential or known safety or health risk must not be in reach of children, including teacher materials such as pens, pencils, and staplers.

more about... safe environments
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What cues is Tan giving me?

Give It a Try
◆ Become familiar with Tan’s cues. Since you are feeding Autumn, ask yourself if the cue Tan is giving is related to eating patterns and individualized feeding cues. Is it related to some other need?
◆ Ask Tan if he would like a snack, hold out your arms as a communicative gesture. Respect what Tan communicates to you; don’t try to feed him if he doesn’t indicate hunger.
★ Appreciate that mobile infants are exploring their environment to learn about it, which includes items that belong to others, such as Autumn’s bowl.
★ Consider that infants and toddlers need to connect with their care teachers throughout the day.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I encourage Tan to play with materials meant for children, not the trash can?
• How can I create an interesting learning environment?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that mobile infants use their senses and emerging physical skills to learn about people and objects.
★ Recognize Tan’s interest in exploring the environment and his need to connect with the secure base his teacher provides.
▲ Interact with Tan. Make eye contact often, and talk with him about his activities.
▲ Ask support staff or co-teachers, if available, to engage in play with Tan.
◆ Offer a variety of intriguing toys for the varying abilities of children. Materials should be slightly challenging so children can practice emerging skills. Rotate toys to engage Tan’s curiosity.
◆ Distribute materials throughout a well-arranged and equipped classroom to support Tan’s desire to explore.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Tan is crawling around the room of his family child care teacher, Ms. Gloria, exploring everything in his path. He comes over to the table where Ms. Gloria is feeding Autumn, 7 months, and pulls to a stand. He reaches for Autumn’s bowl while holding on tightly to the table. Ms. Gloria says, “Hi, Tan, you came over to the table to see what we are doing. I am feeding Autumn. If you want to join us, I’ll help you wash your hands and sit down with us.” She holds out her hands. Tan looks away dropping to his knees and continues his explorations.

Soon, Tan nears the diaper changing table. Earlier in the week Ms. Gloria had noticed Tan’s interest in the trash can so she moved it back against the wall and to the side of the diapering table so it isn’t as easily seen. She put a basket filled with sensory balls along the wall adjacent to the diaper changing station, though not against it for health reasons. When Ms. Gloria sees Tan stop near the diapering table and look around she says, “Tan, look at the new basket of balls beside you,” and points to them. Tan crawls over and takes each ball out, watches it roll away and crawls after one of them. Ms. Gloria watching Tan says, “That brown ball is rolling fast, can you catch it? You stopped it. Will you roll it to me?” Tan rolls the ball close enough to Ms. Gloria that she can reach it with her foot and gently roll it back.

Tan chases after the ball, which comes to a rest. Losing interest in the ball, he looks around and spots a group of metal and plastic coffee containers. Ms. Gloria had filled some of the coffee containers with different objects to have them make different noises, also making some containers heavier, and others lighter. Tan hits the containers with his hand, bangs them on the floor and hits them against each other. Some of the containers require two hands to manipulate, so he experiments with those in a different way than those he holds with one hand. He shakes them as well, smiling at some of the noises, reacting with surprise at other noises. Those not making any noise when he shakes them, he tosses aside.

Tan vocalizes, and Ms. Gloria responds, “What are you shaking?” Tan looks at the container. Ms. Gloria comments, “You are shaking the blue can. It makes a loud noise.” Tan smiles and shakes it again. Ms. Gloria responds, “Wow, that makes a clunking sound. You like that can? You keep shaking that one.” Tan shakes the can some more, then experiments with other cans and their sounds.

Social Development:
The child will engage in give-and-take exchanges with an adult.

Cognitive Development:
The child will make things happen and understand the causes of some events.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will comprehend the message of another’s communication.
Preston, 14 months, is roaming around the room. He walks to a low shelf unit and picks up a ring tower with five rings on it. He dumps the rings off of the tower, watches them fall to the floor, and looks at his teacher, Ms. Rashima, who is busy having a snack with two children. Preston drops the ring tower on his way to the window. He briefly gazes out the window, then wanders to the space for block play.

Sitting down in the block area, Preston grabs one block in each hand and bangs them together, looking over at Ms. Rashima with a big smile on his face. Ms. Rashima says, “Build with those blocks, Preston.” He looks back and forth between the blocks, then over at Ms. Rashima and the two children at the snack table. Smiling, he bangs them together again. Again, she doesn’t notice. Preston drops the blocks and rakes the rest of the blocks off the shelf onto the floor.

He walks to a table near the manipulative area that has several knobbed puzzles on it. He grabs a couple of the pieces and begins to bang them together. He gets a big smile on his face and then looks over at Ms. Rashima, who is wagging her finger at him and saying, “No, no, Preston.” Preston throws the puzzle pieces down and wanders to the cozy area where he lies down.

“Come learn with me.”
Watch

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more about... moving and learning

Infants are curious and compelled to move and explore. Through movement, babies make discoveries about themselves, the environment and gain a sense of mastery. By using large muscles (legs, arm, trunk of body), coordinating movements and balancing, a child moves through the environment and strengthens other developmental domains. For instance, his ability to move plays a big role in his social interactions with peers. She has access to materials to use her small muscles (fingers, hands) by picking an object up, turning it over, and moving its different pieces. He is building thinking skills, which is cognitive development. He learns how items fit into space, if there is a reaction to his action and how an item is like or unlike another item (grouping and categorizing). It is important to give all children the ability to move about their environment and interact with peers and materials. Some children will need your assistance.
Ask Yourself
- Why is Preston roaming and not engaging in play?
- What are ways I can interact with Preston while I am caring for other children?

Give It a Try
★ Keep in mind that children communicate through their behaviors. Care teachers need to interpret those behaviors and respond accordingly. Roaming may indicate a child is disengaged and needs your help to reengage in play and learning.
★ Acknowledge that young children are wired to move. Recognize that Preston’s mobility allows him to explore his environment and his desire to interact with his surroundings needs to be supported.
▲ Respond positively to Preston’s need for you to engage in his play and share in his discoveries. This emotional support strengthens his healthy attachment to you.
▲ Make eye contact with Preston and use other non-verbal gestures, such as smiling or pointing, to show you are interested in what he is doing.
▲ Comment on Preston’s activities. Your words support Preston’s language development.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
- What does Preston find so interesting about banging blocks and puzzle pieces together?
- Why does Preston frequently look at me?
- How can I support Preston in play?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize Preston’s interest in, and the importance of, experimenting with materials. Children enjoy discovering how their actions make other actions happen.
★ Acknowledge the multiple uses for materials that children discover. Preston is learning how to group and categorize items through exploring their similarities and differences.
★ Be aware that Preston is appropriately using you as a secure base by visually checking in with you. Young children need frequent reassurance that you are close by and available to them. When Preston checks in with you, respond verbally or nonverbally (smile, make eye contact).
▶ Offer a variety of interesting and developmentally appropriate toys for the varying skill levels of children. Materials should not be too easy or too hard. They should be slightly challenging so children can practice emerging skills. Also, provide materials that are intended for banging, such as cymbals or other musical instruments.
▶ Support Preston’s exploration with an interesting and challenging environment. Arrange the environment with safe experiences so it allows Preston to explore, experiment, practice and accomplish his discoveries.
▲ Notice what Preston is doing and comment on his actions, such as, “Those blocks make a big noise when you hit them together. I think you like making that noise.” Use language to help him stay connected to you even from a distance.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Preston, 14 months, is roaming around the classroom. He walks to a low shelf unit and picks up a ring tower with five rings on it. He dumps them off of the tower, watches them fall to the floor, and looks over at his teacher, Ms. Rashima, who is having a snack with two children. Ms. Rashima smiles at him and says, “The rings fell off of the tower and are on the floor.” He looks down at the rings, squats down and picks up one of the rings. Ms. Rashima says, “Get the tower and show me how to put the rings back on it.” Preston sits in a carpeted play area, next to the snack table area and stacks the rings in no particular order. Ms. Rashima comments on the color of the ring he is sliding on and then says, “The tower is full,” when no more rings will fit.

Ms. Rashima asks, “Do you want to dump and stack the rings again?” Preston looks around the room and then back at Ms. Rashima, not displaying any interest in what he wants to do. “Do you want to get the blocks?” she asks. Preston toddles to the block area and picks up one block in each hand and again looks over to Ms. Rashima. She notices, smiles at him, and says, “You have two blocks in your hands.” He starts banging the blocks together, making a big noise with each bang. Ms. Rashima says, “Those blocks make a loud noise when you bang them together!” He gives Ms. Rashima a big smile, proud of his noisy accomplishment.

Ms. Rashima knows Preston needs support at times to stay engaged in play, and that she needs to attend to the children who are finishing up their snack. She asks, “Preston, can you show me the blocks?” Preston comes closer and holds up the blocks for her to see. Preston bangs his blocks a couple more times, then takes a look at the rings he stacked on the tower. He stacks his blocks then attempts to put a ring on top, but the ring topples off. “Oops, it fell off, try again,” she replies. Preston tries again. Then Preston, gathering up two plastic rings, discovers that they make a different noise when banged together. Ms. Rashima says, “You are making a softer noise with the rings.” Ms. Rashima bobs her head to Preston’s banging beat. After snack, Ms. Rashima shows Preston the container of instruments to see if he is still interested in making noise.

Knowing that Preston enjoyed the art of making noise, Ms. Rashima, over the next few days, makes sensory shakers out of plastic containers and various size boxes (jewelry, cereal, shoeboxes). With lids secured shut, they hold objects which make noise when shaken. Preston enjoys exploring the new materials.
Mr. Aaron and Ms. Claire create family photo displays for the mobile infants they care for. Some parents brought in pictures of themselves, pets and relatives. The care teachers also took photos of parents and relatives with their child at drop-off and pick up so every family was represented, even if they weren’t able to provide photos. Mr. Aaron also took photos of each child and of children playing together to add to the displays.

Knowing children should be able to see the displays, they hung them at the children’s eye level in various places around the room. The teachers also added pieces of the children’s artwork. They used tape to secure the photos to the wall, knowing that staples and push pins are hazardous.

Derrick, 12 months, and Sadie, 13 months, are the first to arrive. Mr. Aaron proudly shows Derrick’s and Sadie’s families the photos and art display. The families are pleased to see the displays.

Mr. Aaron greets another infant and when he turns, he notices that Sadie has torn all of her display items off of the wall. She is sitting mouthing one of the photos, and patting a crumpled piece of art work. Upset by the destruction of his hard work creating the display, Mr. Aaron kneels by Sadie saying, “Sadie, what did you do? Now you have no pictures up. Come on, you have to go play somewhere else.” He seats Sadie in the middle of room away from the walls and hands her a plush toy dog.

During the day, many of the mobile infants pull down the displays, interested in the photos and art work. Ms. Claire removes the remaining displays so the photos and art won’t be destroyed. The teachers are very frustrated that their hard work was ruined and worse, that the children don’t have photos to look at.
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more about... displays

Displays are beneficial to a child’s learning when a few simple guidelines are followed. Keep displays relevant to the child’s world. Take photos of their community; include photos of family, friends, pets, their home, car or a city bus to help them identify with their world. Display pictures that show animals and nature in a photo style, rather than always in cartoon form. Pictures of ABCs and numbers are not appropriate for infants and toddlers and will not help young children learn the alphabet or to count. Change your display at least monthly to keep children interested. What is most important about using displays with infants and toddlers is your interaction. Talk about what is in the photo, ask simple questions, make up a story about the photo, and use descriptive words such as colors, shapes and sounds. Magazines and inexpensive calendars make great resources for pictures. Displays can enhance any environment.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What benefits do displays provide to young children?

Give It a Try
△ Consider that photos and displays create a welcoming environment and show that all families are important, respected and welcomed.
△ Use family photos to help children make the daily transition and separate from families at drop-off.
△ Talk about photos and displays to introduce children to new vocabulary, help them understand relationships among peers and family, and to reinforce language skills.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why do mobile infants tear things off of the wall?
• What is the most appropriate teacher response to Sadie’s actions?

Give It a Try
★ Expect children to explore, be curious, and to interact with everything in their environment, including displays.
★ Set realistic expectations about children’s ability to resist exploring specific items in the environment.
△ Use a calm voice, telling Sadie “we don’t tear pictures.” Gently redirect Sadie to a learning area that usually interests her. Help her become interested in the materials.
△ Be sure to avoid shaming, humiliating, or becoming angry at the child.
△ Help children learn to manage impulses by suggesting strategies such as softly patting and pointing to pictures. Model the strategies you offer.
△ Remind Sadie that you want the pictures to stay on the wall when she attempts to remove one. Offer her a photo book she can freely explore.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• What are other ways to install displays?

Give It a Try
△ Post displays using a clear adhesive film that covers the entire display and the margins to secure it to the wall.
△ Attach sticky backed Velcro® to the back of photos, artwork and to the wall so children can safely remove and reattach displays. Laminate photos and artwork for durability.
△ Purchase commercially-made display cases to use in early care and education programs.
Mr. Aaron and Ms. Claire create family photo displays for the mobile infants they care for. Some parents brought in pictures of themselves, pets and relatives. The care teachers also took photos of parents and relatives with their child at drop-off and pick up so every family was represented, even if they weren’t able to provide photos. Mr. Aaron also took photos of each child and of children playing together to add to the displays.

Knowing children should be able to see the displays and that they learn by touching, the teachers had to create displays that are safe and durable. The teachers attached sticky backed Velcro® to the photos and artwork, and to the wall and back of the shelves where children can see the photos. They also put additional photos and artwork at the greeting and departure area where parents sign in.

Derrick, 12 months, and Sadie, 13 months, are the first to arrive. Mr. Aaron greets the children and families and shows them the displays. The families are pleased to see the display.

After the families leave, Mr. Aaron takes Derrick over to his display and points out the picture of Derrick and his cat. He says, “Derrick, there you are with Snowball.” Derrick smiles and says, “Kitty” patting Snowball’s photo. Derrick grabs the photo and it comes off. Derrick looks at Mr. Aaron in concern, “That’s all right. Just stick it back up,” Mr. Aaron says as he gently guides Derrick’s hand to reattach the photo. Derrick mimics his action and continues to play this game, pulling the photo off, and putting it back with help from Mr. Aaron, smiling, and enjoying the back and forth of their interaction. Each time Derrick puts a photo back on the display, Mr. Aaron smiles and gives a little clap recognizing the accomplishment.

By this time, Sadie has already figured out the photos come off but has not learned they can be reattached. She has taken all of the laminated photos off of the wall and is mouthing one of them and patting her artwork, also taken off of the wall. Mr. Aaron kneels down next to her saying, “Sadie, I do not want you to put photos in your mouth. Let’s look at the picture.” He gently removes the photo from her mouth, shows her the picture and says, “See Pappa Joe.” Sadie smiles, points and repeats, “Pappa.” Mr. Aaron shows her how the photos reattach.

During departure, Mr. Aaron and Ms. Claire notice families showing their children the pictures near the sign out sheet, which is exactly why the teachers placed them there.
So Aggressive...With Others

Ms. Myra and her assistant teacher are working together in a multi-age group of eight children. Ms. Myra is the primary care teacher for Tre, 11 months, and Jamal and Deon, 17-month-old twins. She is sitting on the floor at the bottom of a climbing structure as Tre and Deon crawl up the steps and scoot down the slide. Deon has a favorite truck in his hand as he repeats the climbing and scooting again and again.

Jamal walks over from the manipulative area and grabs Deon’s truck out of his hand. Then, he bangs Deon on the head with it. Deon lets out a wail and turns to Ms. Myra who quickly comforts him saying, “That hurt, didn’t it, Deon? You had the truck and your brother took it away and hit you with it.” After he calms down, she helps Deon go back to playing on the climbing structure with Tre.

After a few minutes, Jamal comes back over and tries to join Deon on the climbing structure. Deon pushes his brother down the steps. Ms. Myra says, “Stop pushing!” and helps Jamal get up from the bottom step. Jamal is obviously upset, so Ms. Myra turns to Deon and says, “Calm down, Deon, or you will have to play somewhere else.” It isn’t long until Jamal and Deon are both on one of the steps of the climbing structure and they begin to push and shove each other. In a minute, both are on the floor at the bottom of the steps. Ms. Myra huffs, “That’s it, both of you have to walk away from the climbing structure. When you wrestle, you can’t play here.”

“At this age, I have few words and little impulse control so I need your guidance.”
Ms. Myra and her assistant teacher are working together in a multi-age group of eight children. Ms. Myra is the primary care teacher for Tre, 11 months, and Jamal and Deon, 17-month-old twins. She is sitting on the floor at the bottom of a climbing structure as Tre and Deon crawl up the steps and scoot down the slide. Deon has a favorite truck in his hand as he repeats the climbing and scooting again and again. Jamal walks over from the manipulative area and grabs Deon’s truck out of his hand. Then, he bangs Deon on the head with it. Deon lets out a wail and turns to Ms. Myra who quickly comforts him saying, “That hurt, didn’t it, Deon? You had the truck and your brother took it away and hit you with it.” After he calms down, she helps Deon go back to playing on the climbing structure with Tre.

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Often, one of the most challenging behaviors that care teachers experience in young children is their emerging ability to control their impulses, also known as self-regulation. Developing impulse control is part of a child’s emotional developmental process and it continues well into their preschool years. Towards the end of the mobile infant stage, and into toddlerhood, children may be aware of a care teacher’s expectation, but they may not have the ability to control their actions based on these expectations. Also remember, young children may control their behavior in one instance then not in the next. This is typical infant and toddler behavior. With appropriate guidance and support from responsive care teachers, and with repetition, supervision and patience, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why did Jamal take Deon’s truck and hit him on the head?
• What can I do to prevent the conflict over the truck?
• How do I address Jamal’s behavior and Deon’s distress?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that older mobile infants are all about “Me” and often seek instant gratification. They want “What they want, when they want it.” As children develop, they observe teacher modeling and learn how to solve problems.
★ Acknowledge that the conflict may not be about possession of the truck. Older mobile infants have not fully developed the communication and social skills needed to express their desires and needs. Jamal may have wanted to engage Deon in play and didn’t know how to express his interest.
› Provide duplicate popular toys to reduce fights over scarce resources. Let Jamal know that there are plenty of trucks and show him where they are.
★ Provide verbal and physical assistance to Jamal so he can interact successfully with Deon. Use strategies such as staying close, verbalizing children’s cues and modeling play.
★ Respond to Deon’s calls of distress promptly, calmly, tenderly and respectfully. Comfort Deon when he is physically and emotionally hurt. Validate his emotions.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I provide positive supervision?
• How can I help Deon and Jamal play together without hurting each other?

Give It a Try
★ Provide constant supervision; mobile infants need your guidance to develop impulse control.
★ Maintain a connection to Jamal and Deon with eye contact, briefly talk to them as you help other children.
› Remain near children as they play to address the need for physical contact and facilitation.
★ Invite Jamal and Deon to join other peers in play. Assess their interests; plan and create new play and learning opportunities to spark their curiosity and support their development.
› Arrange environment and materials to encourage children to spread out in the space, in order to reduce aggression.
Ms. Myra and her assistant teacher are working together in a multi-age group of eight children. Ms. Myra is the primary care teacher for Tre, 11 months, and Jamal and Deon, 17-month-old twins. Knowing young toddlers are still learning about taking turns, she is sitting on the floor near the climber’s stairs where Tre and Deon crawl up the steps and scoot down the slide. Deon has a favorite truck in his hand as he repeats the climbing and scooting again and again.

Jamal walks over from the manipulative area, grabs Deon’s truck out of his hand and bangs Deon on the head with it. Deon lets out a wail and turns to Ms. Myra who comforts him saying, “That hurt, didn’t it Deon? You were playing with that truck and Jamal took it and hit you with it.” Ms. Myra rubs Deon’s back while he calms down.

Once Deon calms, Ms. Myra says, “Deon, do you want your truck back?” Deon nods yes. She kneels and gently encloses Jamal and the truck in her arm, still holding Deon’s hand. “Deon, tell Jamal, ‘I want my truck back please,’” says Ms. Myra holding her hand out for the truck. Deon says, “Truck back,” and puts his hand out too. Ms. Myra says to Jamal, “Deon wants his truck back. Will you please give it to him?” Jamal, looking at Ms. Myra and then at Deon, hesitantly hands it to Deon. After a pause, Ms. Myra says, “Thank you. Jamal, hitting hurts. If you want a truck ask for it.” She holds her hand out flat to replicate a gesture for “asking.”

Ms. Myra says to Jamal, “Do you want to choose a truck from the construction area?” Jamal nods and hurries off to select his truck. With a truck in hand, Jamal joins Deon climbing and scooting, alternating turns with Tre. Ms. Myra is sitting with them as they play while supervising and interacting with the other children.

Jamal bumps Deon as they climb the stairs. Deon screams and pushes Jamal down. Ms. Myra kneels by Jamal and checks for injuries while comforting him. “Jamal, are you hurt?” He says, “No,” and Ms. Myra doesn’t see any injuries. Deon is watching the interaction. She says, “Deon, pushing hurts. When you want Jamal to stop say, ‘Stop that Jamal.’”

Then she turns her attention to Jamal saying, “When you are close to Deon, you need to leave space for him to move; stay behind him on the stairs. You will get to go down the slide after he does.” Addressing both boys she says, “Let’s try the stairs again. Deon, it’s your turn. Jamal, wait here until Deon gets to the top.” Jamal waits with Ms. Myra, keeping an eye on Deon. As soon as Deon is at the top, Jamal says to Ms. Myra, “Go.” Ms. Myra smiles and says, “Yes, it is your turn.”
Madison, 14 months, is relaxing and looking at books in the cozy area of Mr. Kanye’s and Ms. Brittany’s mobile infant room. Madison chooses the My Family board book from the book shelf, looking at pictures in the book, starting from the back of the book and turning through the pages. When she is done, she tosses the book onto the floor. She picks up the Mi Papá board book, glances at the front cover, then throws it aside. Next, she chooses a baby animal lift-the-flap book and is unable to open some of the flaps, but she discovers a flap that is partially open. She pulls harder on the flap and it rips off. While turning a few more pages, she rips another flap off. Tired of that book, she next chooses a paper page book and begins tearing the pages.

Mr. Kanye, seeing Madison’s actions, takes the book from her and says, “Madison, what are you doing? You can’t rip up and throw books. These books are ruined.” Mr. Kanye gathers up the torn pieces and damaged books and lays them on the counter hoping they can be repaired. Madison, angry that Mr. Kanye took her books, throws a plush animal and cries. Ms. Brittany returns the plush animal to the cozy area, picks up Madison and says, “Throwing is not a choice. You have to be gentle. You need to go somewhere else to play.” She seats Madison on the floor near the shelves with stacking cups, a busy box and a toy piano.
Madison, 14 months, is relaxing and looking at books in the cozy area of Mr. Kanye’s and Ms. Brittany’s mobile infant room. Madison chooses the *My Family* board book from the bookshelf, looking at pictures in the book, starting from the back of the book and turning through the pages. When she is done, she tosses the book onto the floor. She picks up the *Mi Papá* board book, glances at the front cover, then throws it aside. Next, she chooses a baby animal lift-the-flap book and is unable to open some of the flaps, but she discovers a flap that is partially open. She pulls harder on the flap and it rips off. While turning a few more pages, she rips another flap off. Tired of that book, she next chooses a paper page book and begins tearing the pages.

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Mobile infants are beginning to learn about the properties of different materials and the effects of their interactions on materials. It takes time for them to learn that books are not to be ripped and that crayons are not to be mouthed. They need frequent supportive reminders from patient and understanding care teachers on how to use materials. Supply the environment with safe and durable materials that can withstand exploration from active little hands. Offer experiences with materials requiring close supervision by looking at and handling the items with the children. Put such materials away after sharing the experience with the children.
Ask Yourself

• Though I often look at books with Madison so she is familiar with how to use them, why does she destroy them?

• What types of books are suitable for mobile infants?

Give It a Try

★ Acknowledge that mobile infants are not yet able to remember rules of behavior and follow them on their own.

★ Consider that mobile infants are interested in their ability to make things happen.

△ Realize you are supporting the proper use of books when you look at books with Madison.

○ Provide books that are sturdy and durable. Board books, vinyl and cloth books are developmentally appropriate for mobile infants to handle.

★ Understand that young children’s small muscle skills are not fully developed so provide books that have easy to turn pages and are of a size that small hands can manage. This doesn’t necessarily mean very small books.

△ Allow mobile infants to explore books with flaps, pop-up books and paper page books with adult involvement and supervision.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• What is the appropriate response to Madison’s actions?

• How can I prevent this from happening again?

Give It a Try

★ Acknowledge that Madison does not understand the results of her actions. Consider that developmentally she is unable to understand what “books are ruined” means. Calmly and briefly describe what happened to the torn book and that it can’t be read anymore.

△ Look at books with Madison instead of moving her to another area of the room.

△ Think about your choice of words when guiding behavior. “Throwing is not a choice” may be confusing because throwing is a choice Madison made. Use direct, personal communication such as “I don’t want you to throw the book.”

△ Be physically near young children to provide interaction and support.

○ Offer a variety of developmentally appropriate books that children can access when they choose.

○ Provide a variety of interesting and developmentally appropriate action/reaction toys.

○ Engage children’s curiosity and fascination with new challenges by introducing new activities and materials.
Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the use of his or her hands, fingers and sight in order to manipulate objects in the environment.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will convey a message or transfer information to another person.

Emotional Development:
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Madison, 14 months, is relaxing and looking at books in the cozy area of Mr. Kanye’s and Ms. Brittany’s mobile infant room. Madison chooses the My Family board book from the book shelf. Looking at pictures in the book, starting from the back of the book, she turns through the pages. When she is done, she tosses the book onto the floor. She picks up the Mi Papá board book, glances at the front cover, then throws it aside.

Mr. Kanye notices Madison looking at the books and tossing them quickly aside, so he joins her in the cozy area, picking up the two books she tossed on the floor. “Hi Madison, these books go on the book shelf.” Mr. Kanye re-shelves My Family and as he attempts to put back Mi Papá, Madison stops him and says, “Boo,” her sound for book. “You want to read Mi Papá?” Madison nods her head yes. Mr. Kanye lets Madison turn the pages as he reads the text and they talk about the pictures. Madison does not turn the pages from front to back; Mr. Kanye just reads whatever page she turns to.

Ms. Brittany brings Mr. Kanye some books she checked out at the library. Knowing Madison and the other mobile infants can get aggressive with books, Mr. Kanye holds the library books, letting them touch the cover and pages and assists them in turning the pages and lifting the flaps of the lift-the-flap book.

Madison gets frustrated and angry when she tries to turn the page of the library book herself so Mr. Kanye helps her by gently turning the page with her. Madison hits the book in anger. Mr. Kanye, looking at Madison, calmly and firmly says, “I do not allow hitting. I will help you turn the page.” Madison angrily throws herself back onto the cushion as Mr. Kanye continues to read. Madison calms herself, sits up and looks at the book with Mr. Kanye.
Mouthing

Watch

Owen, 9 months, is in the cozy area looking at a favorite book, Margaret Miller’s *Baby Faces*, with his family child care teacher, Ms. Joan. Owen has a soft rattle teether in his hand and chews on it as Ms. Joan reads the book. When Ms. Joan finishes, she closes the book, laying it in her lap. Owen drops his teether and reaches for the book, grabbing it with one hand and bending forward to put his mouth on the corner. Ms. Joan gently says, “No, Owen, books are not for your mouth.” She reaches over to the book basket which holds a collection of board, vinyl, and cloth books to select another book to read.

The book he picks to read shows wear and tear. The corners are chewed off, and the pages are separating from the cardboard backing. She notices the other books are in similar disrepair. Ms. Joan doesn’t want the books to get damaged. Laying aside a book to read with Owen, she collects the rest of the books and the book basket, and stores them away in a storage cabinet.

Owen watches his teacher’s actions and frowns. Ms. Joan comes back to the cozy area telling Owen, “When we chew on the books, it damages them. We’ll get the books out when I can read them to you.” Picking up the book, Ms. Joan holds Owen on her lap and says, “You like this book about daddies and their babies. Do you want to open the book?” Ms. Joan lets Owen turn the pages as they read the story. When the story is over, Ms. Joan returns the book to the storage cabinet.

“I am too young to know what can and cannot be mouthed. Give me safe and appropriate things to mouth and explore.”
Owen, 9 months, is in the cozy area looking at a favorite book, Margaret Miller’s Baby Faces, with his family child care teacher, Ms. Joan. Owen has a soft rattle teether in his hand and chews on it as Ms. Joan reads the book. When Ms. Joan finishes, she closes the book, laying it in her lap. Owen drops his teether and reaches for the book, grabbing it with one hand and bending forward to put his mouth on the corner. Ms. Joan gently says, “No, Owen, books are not for your mouth.” She reaches over to the book basket which holds a collection of board, vinyl, and cloth books to select another book to read.

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Young children learn by using all of their senses. This includes using mouthing to learn the differences in textures, density (hard/soft), how things fit in space, and how they taste. This enables them to make connections and categorize items in their environment as a foundation for further learning. However, infants and mobile infants are too young to know the difference between what should or shouldn’t be mouthed so it is the care teacher’s job to provide a variety of safe items for children to explore. As children grow with the support of knowledgeable and responsive care teachers, they will come to learn what should/should not be mouthed and the appropriate way to use materials.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction   ★ = Child Development & Interest
★ = Environment & Materials   ◆ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What do mobile infants learn by mouthing toys and materials?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that Owen is exploring and discovering the newness of his environment by mouthing and that young children often use this method to explore.
★ Recognize that infants learn by using all of their senses. This includes Owen using mouthing to learn about textures, density (hard/soft), how things fit in space, and how they taste.
★ Recognize that Owen is coordinating his oral muscle movements (use of tongue, chewing) by mouthing objects and is strengthening small muscle skills (hands, fingers) by moving objects to/from his mouth.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I support Owen’s need to mouth objects and not restrict his access to books?
• How can I keep a clean and sanitary environment and the books in good repair?

Give It a Try
› Provide an interesting variety of safe and appropriate objects for infants to mouth and handle throughout the environment, including the book area. In addition to offering books, choose toys that are visually interesting and that offer a variety of sensory experiences. Include musical toys and a variety of textured objects.
› Supply a variety of cloth and vinyl books, photo albums, and teacher-made books that children can access and use as they desire. These items may be more durable than board books. Include some board books to widen children’s exposure to content and illustrations.
△ Sit with Owen, sharing his interest in books. Show books to him and model how to use them.
△ Encourage children to turn the pages. Comment on the illustrations and on the children’s observations. Allow mobile infants to turn pages however they want to – front to back, backwards, more than one page at a time.
◆ Establish a procedure to remove and sanitize materials that have been mouthed before returning them to the children’s play areas. Add a variety of materials to the environment that are clean and ready for play so children have play materials during the cleaning/sanitizing process.
› Check materials frequently for damage. Discard or repair, if possible. Rotate materials, including books, into play so children always have learning materials.
Owen, 9 months, is looking at a favorite book, Margaret Miller’s *Baby Faces*, with his family child care teacher, Ms. Joan. Owen has a soft rattle teether in his hand and chews on it as Ms. Joan reads the book. When Ms. Joan finishes, she closes the book, laying it in her lap. Owen drops his teether and reaches for the book, grabbing it with one hand and bending forward to put his mouth on the corner. Ms. Joan gently says, “No, Owen, this book is not for your mouth. You have a teether to chew on.” She hands Owen a different teether. Ms. Joan puts the previously mouthed teether and the book in one of the containers for soiled toys that are placed around the room, out of the children’s reach. These materials will be cleaned and sanitized later.


After reading the book, Ms. Joan places the book basket, with a board book, small photo album, and a variety of cloth, vinyl and teacher-made books, next to Owen for him to make his own selection. Ms. Joan also has a small container of toys that Owen can safely orally explore including a soft doll, and various teethers and rattles. She also places a ring stacker and sensory block near him. Ms. Joan notices Owen mouthing a vinyl book. Knowing that Owen is too young to understand what items are allowed and not allowed to be mouthed, Ms. Joan lets Owen continue to explore and mouth the vinyl book knowing it can be easily cleaned and it will not damage the book.

Throughout the day, Ms. Joan looks at books with the children. For books that should not be mouthed, she holds the books and lets the children turn the pages however they want to – front to back, backwards, or more than one page at a time. Sometimes she reads the book’s text, other times she describes what the book’s pictures are about, asking simple questions and responding to children’s cues and vocalizations.

Each day, Ms. Joan makes a routine check of the books to verify they are still intact and in good shape for the children to enjoy and read from cover to cover. If possible, she mends the books in poor shape. She discards books that are no longer complete or are in such poor repair they can’t be mended. Ms. Joan also rotates materials, including books, into play throughout the day so that as soiled materials are removed the children will still have ample toys and materials to choose from.
Simona, 13 months, and Chrystal, 11 months, have discovered that pulling toy bins off the shelf and dumping the contents is lots of fun! Chrystal crawls behind Simona as she toddles through the manipulative area, pulling bins of interlocking blocks and links off the shelf and dumping the toys on the floor. Simona relishes the noise the toys make as they crash to the floor and squeals with glee. She looks over at Chrystal as if to say, “I did it!” Chrystal responds to her pleasure by clapping her hands and smiling from ear to ear. The girls play with the blocks and links for a few moments before reaching for another bin to dump.

Every time Simona dumps a bin, her family child care teacher, Ms. Diann, says in a loud voice, “No dumping, Simona.” Simona stops what she is doing and looks at Ms. Diann. She pauses, plays for a few minutes with the toys while looking back occasionally at Ms. Diann. Simona moves to another shelf. With Chrystal close behind, she pulls a bin of toy bugs to the floor. Both girls clap and squeal as the bin’s contents fall to the floor with a clatter.

Ms. Diann comes over to the manipulative area and sits down with Simona and Chrystal. She says, “Let’s pick up the toys.” Then she picks up one of the bins and waits as Simona picks up some links and puts them in the container. Ms. Diann takes a turn and together, they get most of the toys back into the correct bins. When they put a toy in the wrong bin, Ms. Diann takes the toy and puts it in the right one. When the toys are all cleaned up, Ms. Diann says to Simona and Chrystal, “Leave the toys in the containers. No more dumping.” When Ms. Diann moves away from the manipulative area, Simona pulls the bin of links off the shelf and dumps it on the floor again to Chrystal’s delight. Ms. Diann sighs.
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One of a mobile infant’s primary jobs is to explore, which includes tipping/dumping. By tipping/dumping, mobile infants learn about cause and effect, a scientific notion. What happens when the items fall over/down? What happens to the contents inside? They also learn the basics of spatial relations, density, and the properties of materials – whether they are hard/soft or solid/hollow. Emotionally, mobile infants may find pleasure in the experience; the thrill of the sound of falling objects; the laughs of their peers; the look on their care teacher’s face; the sense of accomplishment – all developmentally appropriate. But tipping/dumping can clutter the environment and create safety hazards. So picking up and organizing materials are important but having appropriate expectations of children’s involvement is essential. Requiring and expecting mobile infants to pick up materials is unrealistic. As they grow and develop, they will learn this skill – with proper guidance. Requiring it before they are ready will frustrate everyone.
Ask Yourself
- Why is Simona dumping out the toys?
- Why does she look at me every time she dumps out a bin?
- How can I encourage the girls to play with the toys instead of dumping them?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge Simona’s interest in dumping. It is a developmentally appropriate activity for mobile infants.
★ Be aware that Simona is appropriately using you as a secure base by visually checking in with you. Young children need frequent reassurance that you are close by and available to them. When she checks in with you, respond verbally or nonverbally (smile, make eye contact).
▲ Widen Simona and Chrystal’s interest in the bin’s toys by pointing out to them the connection between the contents. For example, show the connection between the toy bugs to a book about bugs.
› Offer a variety of interesting and developmentally appropriate toys for the varying abilities of children. Materials should not be too easy or too hard, though they should be slightly challenging so children can practice emerging skills.
▲ Provide appropriate dumping and filling containers such as various size bowls, boxes and lids, plus materials to dump and fill.
› Be sure to make a manageable number of materials available to the children. Too many things can be overwhelming, and children may not be able to find coordinating parts (such as all the cups for stacking cups). Too many materials make play areas congested and interfere with play. Provide enough things to minimize conflict among children.
▲ Introduce new activities and materials. Children are intrigued by new challenges and such opportunities to engage their curiosity.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
- How can I encourage the girls to pick up the toys and put them where they belong?
- Knowing that young children like to dump toys, how can I make the clutter manageable and keep an organized space?

Give It a Try
★ Consider the age and developmental abilities of each child. Sorting, matching and the ability to attend to cleaning up are based on the child’s development. Set appropriate expectations.
▲ Make cleaning up an engaging, enjoyable activity. Make up a silly song about the items you are putting away. Taking turns, invite each girl to add to the bin, including yourself in the process. The key is your positive involvement.
▲ Comment on children’s efforts to clean up. Focus on the process and the value of what children are learning, not the end result of organized toys and space.
› Put a few toys on low shelves so children can see what is accessible for play, making it easy to return the toys to their place.
› Place a picture of the toy on the front of the bin and on the shelf so children can see where the toys belong.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Simona, 13 months, and Chrystal, 11 months, have discovered that pulling toy bins off the shelf and dumping the contents is lots of fun! Chrystal crawls behind Simona as she toddles through the manipulative area, dumping bins of interlocking blocks and links. Simona relishes the noise the toys make when they crash to the floor and squeals with glee.

Before Simona dumps a bin, she looks at her family child care teacher. Ms. Diann is aware of Simona’s need to check in with her, so no matter where she is or how busy she is, Ms. Diann periodically looks at Simona to see if she needs to re-connect with her. Ms. Diann catches Simona’s eye and comments, “You got the links out. Are you going to hook them together?” Simona tries to hook the links.

Ms. Diann observes Simona and Chrystal’s dumping escapade. Knowing that dumping is interesting and developmentally appropriate for mobile infants, she realizes she will need to make environmental changes and offer more opportunities for appropriate dumping and filling activities. For now, she decides interaction is the best strategy to refocus the girls.

The girls dump a bin of toy bugs; Ms. Diann joins them in play. She and the girls have the bugs “crawl” up and down their legs and arms, over their lap, and across the floor. Ms. Diann describes what the bugs are doing to add vocabulary to the interaction. She extends the learning opportunity by selecting a bug book that is stored near the bug bin. Looking at the book she says, “Take a look, this bug looks just like that bug!” They scramble over to see what she is talking about, looking at the bugs in the book and then at the bugs on the floor.

After looking at several pages, Ms. Diann sees they are losing interest; they are looking away from the book and bugs. Ms. Diann says, “Let’s put these bugs back in the bin so you can find something else to play with.” Ms. Diann puts a bug in the bin, and Simona and Chrystal do as well. Each time Simona puts a bug in the bin, she looks up at Ms. Diann who smiles and comments, “You found another one. You put a bug in the bin.” Simona puts a link in the bin. Ms. Diann removes it saying, “This is a link, not a bug. It goes in the link bin.” Knowing their short attention span and their developmental levels, Ms. Diann encourages but does not insist they clean up. She does most of the picking up, but the girls are involved in the process.

Before the children arrive the next morning, Ms. Diann has taken some materials out of the bins and set them on the lower shelves so children can see what is accessible for play. She also inventoried the materials to remove toys that are too difficult and added toys that support the children’s current and emerging developmental skills.

To build on Simona’s interest in dumping and filling, Ms. Diann had parents donate different size old metal cooking bowls and shoeboxes with lids. The metal bowls will make noise when the children put in objects, such as play food, that they then can pour into another bowl. Shoeboxes can be filled, dumped and stacked. Lids can be put on and taken off. Both types of containers are open to a child’s imagination.

Emotional Development: The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

Language & Communication Development: The child will demonstrate interest in book reading, story telling and singing and will eventually understand the meaning of basic symbols.

Cognitive Development: The child will learn to group people and objects based on their attributes.
Tantrumming

Care teacher, Ms. Tiffany, brought in a library book to share with her mobile infants. She joins Emma, 14 months, who is already looking at a book. Two children see Ms. Tiffany with the new book and join her and Emma on the carpet. Other children are engaged in play, so Ms. Tiffany doesn’t interrupt them and will share the new book throughout the week so all the children will get opportunities to explore it.

Christian, 18 months, and Emma sit in front of Ms. Tiffany. Zoe, 15 months, tries to sit on Ms. Tiffany’s lap. Ms. Tiffany says, “Zoe, you can’t sit on my lap, you need to sit on the floor. Sit beside Emma.” Zoe fusses and doesn’t move. “Zoe, I can’t read the book until you sit down. Go sit beside Emma please,” says Ms. Tiffany as she tries to guide Zoe to her seat. Zoe cries and resists. Ms. Tiffany says, “Zoe, your friends want to read, please sit down.” She gently picks up Zoe and seats her next to Emma. Zoe sits, cries and swings her arm hitting Emma in her anger.

Ms. Tiffany starts reading and Zoe scoots closer to her and in front of Emma. Ms. Tiffany comments, “Zoe, scoot back, now Emma can’t see.” Zoe yells, “No!” kicks her feet and twists her body away from Ms. Tiffany’s reach. So Ms. Tiffany decides she will scoot away from Zoe so all the children will be able to see the book. Ms. Tiffany starts reading once more, showing the illustrations to the children starting with Christian, Emma, and then Zoe. Zoe, still angry, leans over Emma and angrily grabs the book to see the pictures. “Zoe, stop. If you are going to interrupt me, I’ll have to put the book away.” Ms. Tiffany removes the book from Zoe’s hand.

By now, Zoe has completely lost control over her behavior. She throws her body to the floor, screams, and kicks her feet. Ms. Tiffany apologizes to the other children saying, “I’m sorry. Book reading is over until Zoe can get herself under control. I’ll read some more later.” Then, she returns the book to the counter as Zoe cries and Emma and Christian look bewildered.

“At this age it doesn’t take much for me to fall apart if my needs aren’t being met.”
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more about... tantrums

Tantrums are one way a child expresses her feelings. They are part of typical development during the older mobile infant and toddler years. Tantrums are not completely preventable, but a knowledgeable, skillful approach may help you to “catch” some tantrums before they start. You need to understand child development, know each child’s capabilities and triggers, read each child’s cues, and be “extra” observant in potential tantrum situations. Then you can interact instead of having to react. Remember, tantrums are more frequent when a child is tired, bored, hungry or frustrated. Be prepared and have a plan to prevent and interact.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• Why did Zoe become upset when she wasn’t able to sit on my lap?
• How can I meet Zoe’s needs to be close to me?
• What strategies can I use to address Zoe’s behavior?

Give It a Try

★ Recognize that Zoe is trying to relate to you as a secure base. She may have difficulty sharing you with other children. Create a comfy place where Zoe can sit on your lap or beside you.
★ Consider each child’s temperament. Children react differently to similar situations based on their temperament.
▲ Prevent behavior issues by anticipating, planning and engaging children in experiences that meet their individual needs. Be flexible.
▲ Use a quiet, reassuring voice. Give yourself a moment to calm down, rather than responding with anger.
▲ Help Zoe calm down by offering her physical comfort. Firmly and calmly say, “You are angry. But I won’t let you hit.”
▲ Focus on the reading experience and not on Zoe’s behavior, as long as she doesn’t attempt to hurt herself or someone else. While reading, occasionally make eye contact with Zoe, smile, and snuggle with her.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• What could be causing Zoe’s strong reactions?
• What strategies can help Zoe engage in peer interaction?
• What guidance strategies are appropriate for Zoe’s behavior?

Give It a Try

★ Appreciate that Zoe may have separation anxiety; she may be upset by the physical separation from her care teacher.
★ Set appropriate expectations. Sitting in assigned spots and waiting their turn is difficult for young children. These skills will develop as children grow older and are supported by appropriate care teaching.
★ Consider that young children have different skill levels in controlling their impulses and self-regulating their behavior.
★ Recognize that strong reactions is one of the ways young children communicate their frustration.
▲ Help Zoe with peer interactions. Prepare her by saying, “Christian is going to read with us.”
▲ Anticipate and accommodate Zoe’s need to be involved. Let her sit near you; offer her first chance to turn the pages.
▲ Keep participation to a very small number of children so the experience is meaningful to each child. Provide one-on-one time with each child throughout the day.
▲ Provide verbal and physical reminders. “Zoe, you’ll see the picture next.”
▲ Avoid threatening children or penalizing the children by ending book time.
▲ Ask a co-teacher to help Zoe while you continue the reading experience. If a co-teacher is not available, tell the children that you will read books as soon as you help Zoe. Offer each one a book to look at while you help Zoe. Give Zoe time to calm down and when she is ready give her a couple choices, including reading time with other children.

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Care teacher, Ms. Tiffany, brought in a library book to share with her mobile infants. She joins Emma, 14 months, who is already looking at a book. Two children see Ms. Tiffany with the new book and join her and Emma on the carpet. Other children are engaged in play, so Ms. Tiffany doesn’t interrupt them and will read the new book throughout the week so all the children will get opportunities to explore it.

Zoe, 15 months, plops down in Ms. Tiffany’s lap ready for story time. Emma wants to sit in Ms. Tiffany’s lap too. “Emma, Zoe is sitting in my lap. Sit here beside me,” says Ms. Tiffany patting the spot next to her. Emma sits down and Ms. Tiffany pats Emma’s knee and smiles at her. Christian, 18 months, joins Emma and Zoe to see the new book.

Ms. Tiffany shows the library book to them and says, “I have a new book about puppies. I will let you see and touch the pictures. Everyone will have a chance.” Ms. Tiffany reads the title and lets each child touch the puppies on the cover, starting with Zoe, who gets very excited. Children her age often need gentle guidance to control their behaviors, such as grabbing at something they want. Ms. Tiffany shows the children the pictures and talks about what the children see, instead of reading the text. She asks simple questions and remarks on the children’s comments and gestures as they point to different items they see.

Ms. Tiffany asks Emma if she would like to turn the page. Zoe, angry because she wanted to turn the page, swipes at the book. Ms. Tiffany gently stops Zoe’s arm and calmly says, “Zoe, I do not allow hitting. Let Emma turn the page.” When it is time to turn the next page, Ms. Tiffany prepares Zoe and whispers in her ear, “Zoe, you will turn the page after Christian.” Ms. Tiffany is sure to involve the children in the experience to build their self-competence and support early reading.

After a few minutes, Zoe loses interest and starts to wiggle in Ms. Tiffany’s lap. Ms. Tiffany says, “Zoe, do you want to get up?” Zoe nods “yes” and leaves Ms. Tiffany’s lap.

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**Emotional Development:**
- The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

**Emotional Development:**
- The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

**Cognitive Development:**
- The child will be able to remain focused on a task or object and to persist in the face of obstacles.
Running

Watch

Mr. Robert is the lead teacher of a mobile infant classroom. The classroom is somewhat small though there are several activity areas including a cozy area with books, a block area, a small dramatic play area, a shelf and low table for manipulatives, and a basket of action/reaction toys near an open, carpeted area. Children are busy playing in various areas.

Khloe and Isaiah, both 15 months, start playing an invented game that involves running from the classroom door across the room to the carpeted area and back. Both are giggling as they repeat their game again and again. Each time they get to the classroom door, they fall against it slapping their hands on the door loudly. When they reach the carpeted area, they collapse together giggling on the carpet.

Mr. Robert notices their game. He gathers them close and says, “Walk in the classroom. Running is dangerous. You might run into a friend, hurt him or fall down and hurt yourselves.” He walks them to the block area and says, “Play here with the blocks.” He returns to what he was doing when he hears the noise and giggling again.

He approaches them repeating the warning that running is dangerous and asks them to walk in the classroom. He tells Khloe to go over to the manipulative area and find something to play with and asks Isaiah to come help him clean up the dramatic play area. As he and Isaiah take turns picking up the materials, he hears Khloe giggling. She has found a new friend, Bailey, 16 months, to play the game with her and both are running to and from the classroom door.

“I am driven to move, it’s how I learn and develop. Give me time, materials and safe space and watch me grow!”
Mr. Robert is the lead teacher of a mobile infant classroom. The classroom is somewhat small though there are several activity areas including a cozy area with books, a block area, a small dramatic play area, a shelf and low table for manipulatives, and a basket of action/reaction toys near an open, carpeted area. Children are busy playing in various areas.

Khloe and Isaiah, both 15 months, start playing an invented game that involves running from the classroom door across the room to the carpeted area and back. Both are giggling as they repeat their game again and again. Each time they get to the classroom door, they fall against it slapping their hands on the door loudly. When they reach the carpeted area, they collapse together giggling on the carpet.

Mr. Robert notices their game. He gathers them close and says, “Walk in the classroom. Running is dangerous. You might run into a friend, hurt him or fall down and hurt yourselves.” He walks them to the block area and says, “Play here with the blocks.” He returns to what he was doing when he hears the noise and giggling again.

He approaches them repeating the warning that running is dangerous and asks them to walk in the classroom. He tells Khloe to go over to the manipulative area and find something to play with and asks Isaiah to come help him clean up the dramatic play area. As he and Isaiah take turns picking up the materials, he hears Khloe giggling. She has found a new friend, Bailey, 16 months, to play the game with her and both are running to and from the classroom door.

Like learning to walk, learning to run gives young children a new sense of accomplishment and confidence and besides that – it is fun! While children are running or engaging in other types of large muscle skills (crawling, walking, and climbing), they are learning about spatial relations (how their body moves and fits in the space they are in), how to coordinate their body movements, and how this allows them to take on new challenges and strengthen their developing sense of security. Learning to run also plays a big role in their social interactions with other children. Mobile infants love to experiment with newly developed skills, but don’t yet know the safety issues surrounding these new skills. Help children practice their large motor skills, like running, by giving them a safe space and plenty of time to run!
Give It a Try

- Note that young children enjoy making new discoveries and receive satisfaction in the ability to repeat them. Discoveries can include exploring body movements, interactions with the environment, peer and independent play.
- Consider that young children are wired to move. Their learning is enhanced by their movements and experiences with the environment.
- Observe mobile infants beginning to play alongside of peers and finding enjoyment in the interactions.
- Assess the current room arrangement. Evaluate the space needed for each learning area, checking the suitability of materials. Consider the age and number of children in the group as well as their current and emerging skills. Experiment with various room arrangements, including an active play area, to determine the best solution for the children, teachers, and program.
- Create a safe space within the room, if possible, for large muscle play and materials such as a small climber and mats or push/pull vehicles and toys. Large muscle toys can be rotated into play daily if there is not safe space for permanent placement.

Give It a Try

- Match children’s interests to appropriate activities. If children are interested in running, and they can’t run in a safe space, arrange for other physical activities such as dancing.
- Participate in play, following their lead or suggesting play ideas, adding materials to extend the learning (e.g. dance with scarves).
- Redirect children’s inappropriate behaviors by acknowledging their interest and helping them transition to new activities.
- Calmly, firmly remind children of classroom rules.
- Schedule outdoor play twice a day for a minimum of 30 minute periods. Children need adequate time for active play (e.g. running, climbing). Dress children appropriately for the weather, adjusting outdoor time based on weather conditions. Physical activities involve children being free to move about (which does not include wagon/buggy rides).
- Appreciate that daily outdoor play engages children’s senses, exposes them to new learning experiences, and offers opportunities to practice and experiment with large muscle activities that may be less possible in indoor play.
- Provide a variety of materials for outdoor play. All equipment and space must be safe for the age of the child using it.
- Comment to children on the appropriateness of running outdoors. When it’s time to go back inside, remind children that they need to walk when they are inside and that they will be able to come outside again later and play the game again.
Mr. Robert is the lead teacher of a mobile infant classroom. He routinely evaluates the environment to assess how it functions and meets the developmental needs of the group. Two weeks ago, to support the current and emerging skills of this group of children, Mr. Robert enlarged the active play area to foster large muscle development. He reduced the size of the block area to house fewer children. The room is somewhat small and is not large enough to safely fit equipment such as a small climber so other types of active play materials were added. Other learning areas in the room include a cozy area with books, a small dramatic play area, a shelf and low table for manipulatives and action/reaction toys.

Khloe and Isaiah, both 15 months, start playing an invented game that involves running from the classroom door across the room to the block area and back. Both are giggling as they repeat their game again and again. Each time they get to the classroom door, they fall against it slapping their hands on the door loudly. Mr. Robert notices their game and comes over to talk to them. As he gently circles them in his arms he comments, “I hear giggling, you are having a fun time, but running in the classroom is dangerous. We run outside. In 10 minutes, it will be time to go outside to play. You can run and run and run when we go out. Now, you can play in the active play area if you need to move your bodies.” Then he guides them over to the active play area.

Mr. Robert says, “Khloe, Isaiah, here is where you can be more active. There are the push and ride cars, rocking horses and the push-n-pull toys. What would you like?” Khloe chooses the frog push-n-pull toy and Isaiah chooses the duck push-n-pull toy and they walk in circles around the active area. Mr. Robert “ribbits” when Khloe walks by and “quacks” when Isaiah walks by. This makes the children giggle then they mimic the sounds of their animals.

In 10 minutes, Mr. Robert tells the children it is time to go outside. They are thrilled and head quickly to the door. Khloe and Isaiah are dragging the toys with them, wanting to take them out. Mr. Robert knows children make new discoveries when using materials in various ways and in different environments so he allows the “indoor” toys to go out. Before opening the door, he reminds the children that outdoor time is where they can run and jump.

Khloe and Isaiah run with their frog and duck toys in tow, realizing the toys don’t roll on the grass but instead plop on their sides and are dragged. Mr. Robert comments, “Your frog and duck keep tipping over. Their wheels won’t roll on the grass. Let’s move them to the sidewalk, they will roll better there.” The pair gives it a try and giggles at their success. Soon, they tire of this activity and start playing their invented running game, running between the fence and the bench with delight. Bailey, 16 months, joins the fun. Mr. Robert, supervising their play, smiles at their obvious joy.

When outdoor playtime is over, Mr. Robert reminds the children that they will return outside after nap time. Until then, they must walk inside the room.
Climbing

Watch

Jorge, 15 months, has just finished his morning snack with Ms. Carlita, his family child care teacher. He heads off to the playroom with Ms. Carlita close behind. Ms. Carlita and Annalise, 4 months, then settle onto the couch so Annalise can drink her bottle, and Ms. Carlita can watch and talk with Jorge as he plays.

No sooner had Ms. Carlita gotten seated and Annalise started drinking her bottle than Ms. Carlita noticed Jorge climbing up the toddler-sized bookshelf. “Jorge, get down. Bookshelves aren’t for climbing on,” says Ms. Carlita. Jorge stops and looks at Ms. Carlita but doesn’t move. She repeats, “Jorge, come on, get down.” Jorge takes another step up the shelf.

Ms. Carlita, with Annalise in her arms, proceeds to the bookshelf and takes Jorge’s hand, helps him down. Ms. Carlita says, “Jorge, take this toy truck and come sit by Annalise and me.” Ms. Carlita selects a truck and places it by the couch for Jorge to play with as she sits and starts to feed Annalise again. Instead, Jorge scrambles up onto the couch, steps on the arm of the couch and attempts to climb up on the back of it. “Jorge, we don’t climb on couches,” says Ms. Carlita as she reaches over with one hand and holds onto Jorge to stop him from climbing. Jorge giggles and falls onto the couch. “Jorge, that is dangerous. Scoot over here and I’ll read you a book.”

But Jorge slides off of the couch, runs to the bookshelf once again and scampers up it.

“Being ready for my every move will help you guide my behavior.”
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more about...climbing

Young children are wired to try out their newly discovered skills. Once they have “tried them out” they want and need to practice them. Then, being the adventurers they are, they try something different – adding a new move, or even an old move to the skill they are practicing. Soon, they will begin practicing another new motor skill. This is a natural occurrence and an important part of a child’s motor, cognitive and emotional development.

Your role is to guide young children on where it is OK to practice these skills. Remember, young children are still learning what furnishings are used for. Your gentle guidance plus daily opportunities to practice skills will keep children safe, teach them social rules of behavior and benefit their development.
Take Another Look

**Ask Yourself**
- Why do mobile infants climb on equipment not meant for climbing?

**Give It a Try**
- Acknowledge that children enjoy new challenges and receive satisfaction in the ability to try to do them.
- Recognize that children are wired to move. Learning is enhanced by experiences that allow them to explore the environment.
- Observe what Jorge may be trying to communicate. He may be climbing on the bookshelf to get your attention.
- Consider that mobile infants are learning what equipment and furnishings are designed to be used for. Remember, even when they do learn, young children will still experiment with their environment.

**Keep Watching**

**Ask Yourself**
- How should I respond to Jorge’s unsafe behavior?
- Why doesn’t Jorge follow my directions to stop climbing?
- What can I do to help prevent unsafe or inappropriate climbing?

**Give It a Try**
- Help Jorge to safety.
- Give short statements to help children understand necessary limits. “I will not let you climb on the bookshelf.”
- Tell children what they are permitted to do. “You may sit on the couch.”
- Acknowledge a child’s interest in a new challenge. Guide a child’s behavior to a similar activity that is safe.
- Consider that mobile infants have not yet learned adult rules and expectations.
- Recognize that infants and toddlers do not understand the possible consequences of unsafe behavior.
- Observe children’s behavior and verbally engage them to try to prevent inappropriate behavior.
- Set up engaging, high interest activities for children to do while the teacher helps individual children with routine care.
- Engage mobile infants in play and verbal interactions. Talk to Jorge about books he sees in the book area to take the focus off of climbing.
- Offer frequent opportunities for safe and appropriate large muscle movement, including climbing. Set up an area where children can move to their heart’s delight.

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Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Jorge, 15 months, has just finished his morning snack with Ms. Carlita, his family child care teacher. He heads off to the playroom with Ms. Carlita close behind. Before Ms. Carlita sits down to feed Annalise, 4 months, she observes Jorge’s actions. He heads to the book area and, in particular, the book shelf. Ms. Carlita has observed that Jorge has recently started climbing, a new skill he seems to practice on many of the furnishings in her home. She waits to see what he decides to do, in case he is choosing a book and not attempting to climb. She watches as Jorge leans forward and grabs onto the shelf and lifts his foot. “Jorge, no climbing on the shelf,” she says. She moves next to Jorge, gently takes his hand and looking into his eyes says, “I will not let you climb on the shelf. Do you want a book?” He shakes his head “no” but takes the book from Ms. Carlita.

“Jorge, bring your book to the couch. I am going to feed Annalise here.” Ms. Carlita had placed some of Jorge’s favorite toys near the couch so he could play near her while she feeds Annalise. Jorge doesn’t like to play far from Ms. Carlita so she has learned to prepare materials and figure out how to engage Jorge especially when she is involved with the other children in her care.

As soon as Ms. Carlita gets seated and Annalise starts drinking her bottle, Ms. Carlita says to Jorge as she pats the space on the couch beside her, “You can sit here and show me your book.” Knowing he usually attempts to climb on the back of the couch, Ms. Carlita takes steps to prevent this behavior. As Jorge starts to scramble up, Ms. Carlita opens her arm to form a space for Jorge to climb into. Once on the couch, she gently puts her arm around him. “What book did you bring?” she asks. He holds it up and says, “Choo-choo.” Ms. Carlita replies, “Oh, I like the train book. Will you show Annalise the train?” Jorge holds the book towards Annalise who is drinking her bottle.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the movements of his or her body in order to move and to interact with the environment.

Social Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will comprehend the message of another’s communication.
Throwing

Samantha, 18 months, and Grant, 12 months, are playing outdoors with their classmates on a lovely fall day. Ms. Kay, their care teacher, has added a collection of pumpkins in a variety of sizes to the playground for the children to explore and they are thoroughly enjoying it. Grant is seated near a big pumpkin patting it while Samantha is exploring several smaller pumpkins. Samantha picks up a pumpkin, cocks her wrist and gives it a toss. It falls from her hand when the weight shifts so she moves on to another pumpkin. She picks that one up and gives it a toss, too, saying, “Ball go!” as she tosses it.

Ms. Heather, Ms. Kay’s co-teacher, has a bucket filled with smaller, ornamental gourds. Grant sees her lift one out and crawls over to her. He picks up a smaller, pumpkin-shaped gourd and immediately gives it a toss, imitating what he saw Samantha do. He turns back to the bucket to pick up another one as Ms. Heather says, “No, no, Grant. These gourds are not balls.” Grant says, “Bah,” his word for ball as he picks one up and gives it a toss. Ms. Heather repeats, “Grant, these are gourds, not balls.” As she turns to Samantha who has come over to explore the gourds, Grant picks up another gourd and throws it. Samantha imitates Grant by throwing one too.

By now, both teachers have begun to tire of reminding the children not to throw the pumpkins and gourds. They put the gourds and smaller pumpkins on the fence ledge out of the children’s reach. Samantha, seeing the pumpkins on the fence ledge, begins to cry as she points to the pumpkins saying, “My ball.” Ms. Kay says to her solemnly, “No, Samantha, those are not balls; they are pumpkins and gourds.” Pretty soon, Samantha is lying on the ground flailing her arms and kicking her legs in a full-blown temper tantrum.

“Don’t be surprised if it looks like a ball and moves like a ball, that I think it is a ball.”
Samantha, 18 months, and Grant, 12 months, are playing outdoors with their classmates on a lovely fall day. Ms. Kay, their care teacher, has added a collection of pumpkins in a variety of sizes to the playground for the children to explore and they are thoroughly enjoying it. Grant is seated near a big pumpkin patting it while Samantha is exploring several smaller pumpkins. Samantha picks up a pumpkin, cocks her wrist and gives it a toss. It falls from her hand when the weight shifts so she moves on to another pumpkin. She picks that one up and gives it a toss, too, saying, “Ball go!” as she tosses it.

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Throwing is fun and it is also a skill. Throwing involves using large muscles, (arm, shoulder, trunk of body, legs), coordination, balance, visual perception, and small muscles (fingers, hand, wrist). Throwing a ball creates a sense of competence and mastery, “I did it!” when a child or adult hurls a ball, regardless of the distance. Throwing a ball provides the opportunity to engage with other children and may lead to building and strengthening friendships and creating a sense of identity. Also remember that a thrown ball needs returned, which means retrieving it or having someone throw it back, which then involves “catching” and a host of different skills. Let’s play ball!
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- Why do the children treat the pumpkins like balls?
- How can I encourage the children to explore the pumpkins instead of throwing them?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that the children’s attention to objects (pumpkins) and the similarity to balls indicates an emerging understanding of the characteristics of objects. They are focusing on the similar characteristics (shape and what they can do with them) rather than the differences (color, ridges in the round shape, etc.)
▲ Decide what you want the children to learn from exploring the pumpkins, then plan and prepare for the experience. Extend the learning opportunity by using songs and books that relate to the pumpkin theme.
▲ Describe the characteristics of the pumpkins; what you see and feel, how pumpkins are similar and different from balls, and the difference in use.
▲ Suggest to children “what to do” instead of “what not to do.” For example, carry the pumpkins to the wagon, and touch and smell the pumpkins. Model the actions you are suggesting.
■ Provide props, such as baskets/boxes, wagons, or cloths to cover/uncover the pumpkins.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- Why do the children imitate each other? One throws and then they are all throwing the pumpkins and gourds.
- Why won’t the children stop throwing when I say, “No”?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize the significant role that imitation plays in children’s experiences. Both Samantha and Grant are imitating their previous experiences with round objects and are also learning from each other.
★ Understand that mobile infants are just starting to develop the ability to manage their behavior and impulse control. These skills develop with age and teacher guidance.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
- What can I do when an activity doesn’t go as planned?
- How do I support the children’s interest in throwing objects?

Give It a Try
▲ Resist the urge to remove toys and materials from the environment.
▲ Observe the children in action to see what interests them about the pumpkins. Introduce new activities when children lose interest or repeatedly behave inappropriately with the materials.
▲ Add a variety of balls to the play area. Offer opportunities for children to practice throwing, rolling, kicking, and shooting baskets. When the children throw pumpkins, remind them that pumpkins are for looking and touching, balls are for throwing.
Samantha, 18 months, and Grant, 12 months, are playing outdoors with their classmates on a lovely fall day. Ms. Kay intentionally introduces natural objects to the children's experiences; this helps children connect to their environment and provides many open-ended play and learning opportunities. Ms. Kay knows that children learn through their five senses and natural objects are an excellent resource to support learning. With this in mind, Ms. Kay has added a collection of pumpkins in a variety of sizes to the playground as well as props children can use with the pumpkins. She has also introduced picture books with photos and illustrations with a fall and pumpkin theme, as well as related songs.

Grant is seated near a big pumpkin patting it while Samantha is exploring several smaller pumpkins. Samantha picks up a pumpkin, cocks her wrist and gives it a toss. It falls from her hand when the weight shifts so she moves on to another pumpkin. She picks that one up and gives it a toss, too, saying, “Ball go!” as she tosses it.

Ms. Kay kneels down by Samantha and says, “That pumpkin does look like a ball. It is round.” Samantha says, “Pumpkin,” and moves to the next pumpkin; she picks it up with two hands. Ms. Kay says, “Whoa, that pumpkin is heavy!” Samantha drops it and watches it roll away. She turns to Ms. Kay and says, “Heavy pumpkin.” Ms. Kay takes Samantha’s hand and says, “Touch the pumpkin, Samantha,” and runs her hand over the pumpkin. Samantha’s eyes get wide as her hand dips into the ridges in the pumpkin. Ms. Kay says, “The pumpkin has ridges in it. Pumpkins are used to make jack-o-lanterns and pumpkin pie. Why don’t you load them in the wagon and pull them over to the shade tree? I’ll help you.”

Ms. Heather, Ms. Kay’s co-teacher, has a bucket filled with smaller, ornamental gourds. Grant sees her lift one out and crawls over to her. He picks up a smaller, pumpkin-shaped gourd and immediately gives it a toss, imitating what he saw Samantha do. He turns back to the bucket to pick up another one as Ms. Heather takes his hand and says, “Take a look, Grant.” Grant says, “Bah,” his word for ball. Ms. Heather says, “It is a gourd. It has bumps and a curly stem.” Grant repeats, “Bah!” She says, “Like a ball, but with bumps and a stem.” He picks up another gourd and gives it a toss. Ms. Heather says, “You saw Samantha throw the pumpkin and liked her idea. I have a different idea. Let’s get a basket and put some gourds in it.” Grant smiles and watches Ms. Heather select a basket. Together, they fill the basket with gourds.
Delilah, 16 months, comes into the mobile infant classroom with her mother. She clings to her mother at the door as she looks across the room at her primary teacher, Ms. Alyssa. Ms. Alyssa is sitting on a mattress in the book area with Hong, 12 months, on her lap. Ms. Alyssa talks with Delilah’s mom as she continues to hold Hong who is playing with a book Ms. Alyssa was reading.

Delilah kisses her mom good-bye at the door and turns back to look at Ms. Alyssa and Hong. She comes running across the room toward Ms. Alyssa and throws herself on the mattress next to her. Ms. Alyssa talks with Delilah as Hong continues to play with the book. Soon, another child enters the room with his parent. Ms. Alyssa looks over and greets the new arrivals. While Ms. Alyssa is talking with the parent, Delilah tries to take the book from Hong but he holds onto it tightly. All of a sudden, Delilah bends over and bites Hong on the thigh.

Hong screams and Ms. Alyssa’s attention is immediately drawn back to him. She asks, “What happened?” She begins to look for the source of Hong’s discomfort and finds the bite marks on his thigh. She turns to Delilah and says through clenched teeth, “No biting, Delilah. Biting hurts.” She moves Delilah from the mattress. Then Ms. Alyssa goes over to the refrigerator, gets an ice pack to put on the bitten area and comforts Hong.

“Being sensitive and responsive to my feelings is the first step in helping me not to bite.”
Delilah, 16 months, comes into the mobile infant classroom with her mother. She clings to her mother at the door as she looks across the room at her primary teacher, Ms. Alyssa. Ms. Alyssa is sitting on a mattress in the book area with Hong, 12 months, on her lap. Ms. Alyssa talks with Delilah’s mom as she continues to hold Hong who is playing with a book Ms. Alyssa was reading.

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There are three types of biting that span from infancy through toddlerhood that are generally observed in early care and learning settings. Exploratory biting typically occurs from infancy through about 14 months of age. Infants want to see what things taste and feel like. The second type of biting is action/reaction biting, a typical developmental behavior of children between 9 and 20 months of age. Children in this age range are beginning to understand that certain actions cause reactions. Some children use biting to get a reaction. Purposeful biting, the third type, emerges around 18 months of age. A child displays this type of biting when attempting to take possession of something or to change the outcome of a situation. It is important for teachers to have extensive knowledge about the types and reasons for biting as well as teaching strategies to reduce biting incidents. Just as important, it is the care teacher’s responsibility to keep all children safe.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can I help Delilah feel supported when her mother leaves?
• How can I reduce biting incidents?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that Delilah may be going through a developmental stage when separation is difficult.
★ Attend to the separation and reunion process. Delilah needs help from her care teacher to manage separation.
▲ Help children transition to meaningful activities after their family members leave. Offer Delilah a way to comfort herself such as holding a favorite security item or looking at a family photo.
▲ Be available to help children recover from feelings, such as sadness, concern, and anxiety, or changes in stimulation that may occur during the separation process.
★ Acknowledge that biting is a typical behavior in a child’s development, though not every child will bite.
★ Recognize that young children have different emotional reactions when upset, frustrated, concerned or anxious.
★ Consider each child’s temperament. Children react differently to similar situations based on their temperament.
▲ Remember that it is the care teacher’s responsibility to keep all children safe.
▲ Observe and know how individual children react to various emotions and situations so you can provide appropriate care that meets each child’s emotional needs. Maintain diligent supervision to stop biting before it occurs.
▲ Be aware of upcoming situations that may lead a child to resort to biting. Plan strategies to address issues before the child feels the need to bite.
▲ Learn about contributing factors related to biting and how to reduce biting incidents.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What are the best ways to respond when one child bites another?

Give It a Try
▲ Comfort the injured child immediately and affirm his reactions.
▲ Wash the bitten area, even if the skin is not broken, and follow first-aid recommendations.
▲ Talk briefly and calmly with Delilah about what she did, describing the impact the bite had on Hong. Use language that is appropriate for the age of the child. Talk with Delilah after attending to Hong’s emotional and physical needs.
▲ Provide clear explanations to help children understand and accept necessary limits related to biting. For example, “That book belongs to Hong, I’ll help you find your own book.”
▲ Complete the required paperwork for this type of situation. Maintain confidentiality as you share incident details with families. Provide resources related to biting to families.
▲ Maintain contact with children who have bitten, or are likely to bite, to remind them that you are available and will help them if they need you.
★ Understand how mobile infants begin to develop self-regulatory skills and your role in supporting them.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Delilah, 16 months, enters the mobile infant classroom with her mother. She clings to her mom at the door as she looks across the room at her primary teacher, Ms. Alyssa. Ms. Alyssa is sitting on a mattress in the book area reading a book to Hong, 12 months, who is sitting on her lap. Ms. Alyssa warmly greets Delilah and her mom when they enter. Ms. Alyssa tells Hong as she points to Delilah, “I’ll be back in a couple of minutes. Delilah just arrived, see?” Ms. Alyssa places Hong on the mattress and moves some books near him.

As Delilah’s mom puts away Delilah’s things, Ms. Alyssa asks about Delilah’s morning. Ms. Alyssa also asks if there is anything she should know about caring for Delilah today. To help Delilah with the morning transition, her mom spends a few extra minutes looking at a book with her at the Good-bye Table. The Good-bye Table is a small table with an adult-size chair and a child-size chair for families to use during transitions. The children use the table during the day for other types of play.

When Delilah’s mom is ready to leave, she makes eye contact with Ms. Alyssa to signal her. Delilah’s mom says good-bye and gives Delilah a hug and kiss. Ms. Alyssa kneels down near Delilah to offer comfort if she wants it. Ms. Alyssa turns to Ms. Alyssa and leans into Ms. Alyssa for a hug. After a few seconds Ms. Alyssa says, “Hong is waiting for me, do you want to look at books with us?” Ms. Alyssa extends her hand, which Delilah grabs and they join Hong. After settling in, Ms. Alyssa starts talking about the pictures in the book Delilah selected.

Gibson, 10 months, and his dad enter the room. Ms. Alyssa greets the new arrivals. She says to Delilah, “I am going to help Gibson say good-bye to his dad just like I helped you say good-bye to your mom. Get your book and come with me.” Today Delilah is happy to walk with Ms. Alyssa. Some days she wants to continue playing so Ms. Alyssa watches her closely, especially if she is near other children.

Ms. Alyssa places extra books on the Good-bye Table and Delilah begins to flip through them. Ms. Alyssa greets Gibson and his dad then asks about Gibson’s morning. While talking with Gibson’s dad, Ms. Alyssa checks on Delilah who is still looking at books. When Gibson’s dad leaves, Ms. Alyssa kneels next to Delilah and says, “Say good morning to Gibson.” Delilah turns to Gibson, touching his foot. Ms. Alyssa says, “That was a gentle touch. Gibson likes gentle touches.” Ms. Alyssa continues, “I’m taking Gibson to play with Hong, do you want to come?” Delilah shakes her head “no” and continues to flip through the books.
Biting...Talking with Families

Family child care teacher, Ms. Laura, is dealing with a string of biting incidents. All of the children in her home-based program are now mobile and move either through rolling, crawling, scooting, toddling or walking and have greater accessibility to each other. The biting episodes are giving Ms. Laura fits as children end up close to each other, out of her direct line of sight at busy times of the day, usually during routine care.

Recently, the family of Yuliana, 12 months, discovered teeth marks on Yuliana’s arm and leg. They were very upset and confronted Ms. Laura, accusing her of poor supervision and threatening to find another teacher if it happened again. Ms. Laura was unaware that the bites had occurred and is now extra careful to supervise the children.

This morning, Yuliana and Adriana, 13 months, are playing together in the dining area with several baskets of manipulative toys while Ms. Laura prepares a snack. Terrance, 14 months, is in the family room dumping and filling different containers with small blocks. Ms. Laura can easily see all of the children.

Mrs. Sanborn arrives with Norah, 4 years. Ms. Laura greets them at the door and inquires about Norah’s morning. Laura hears Terrance crying and turns to see him walking towards her. He says, “Ow,” and is holding his arm. The area is swollen, red, and has obvious teeth marks. Ms. Laura is distraught. She realizes that she will have to talk to Terrance’s family and that it is highly likely that his family will discuss the biting incident with Yuliana’s family. She prepares herself for a difficult afternoon and worries that Yuliana’s family will find new child care when they hear about another biting episode.

“My family shows concern because they want the best care for me.”
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Maintaining a trusting relationship with families is crucial to providing respectful care for their children. The way you talk with a family member about biting incidents can have a big effect on teacher-family relationships. Families want to trust that you are caring for their children at all times and that you are diligent in keeping them safe. They want you to have the knowledge and skills to know why biting occurs and to actively use strategies to prevent it. Family members also need assurance that you are empathetic and know how their child, in particular, likes to be comforted when in distress. It is essential that you respect them as the most important people in the child’s life, and acknowledge their concern. Taking responsibility for actions that occur is part of a care teacher’s role.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- How can I supervise all the children and still attend to preparing meals, diapering and greeting families at arrival and departure?

Give It a Try
- Arrange the environment to limit access to areas that are difficult to supervise. Use infant gates to block off unsupervised areas.
- During care giving routines, occasionally make eye contact and talk to the children. This may help them stay engaged in play.
- Place play and learning materials in different areas throughout the space that is in your line of sight.
- Have some of the meal preparation completed before families arrive so your attention can be focused on the children.
- Have different play experiences set up for the different ages of children so they can immediately engage in play if they choose.
- For center-based care, alert your co-teacher (if applicable) when you are leaving the area. Make sure to remain in ratio and to maintain group size requirements at all times.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- What strategies can I use with family members to communicate this important information and be responsive to their concerns?
- What do I say to families when I didn’t observe a biting incident?
- How can I reassure families that I am providing the best care possible?

Give It a Try
- Call family members to notify them that an incident has occurred before they arrive to pick up their child. This allows time to explain what happened, to answer questions and gives the family time to process the information before arriving at the child care program.
- Communicate with families promptly about accidents and injuries that occur. Welcome their questions and their feedback.
- Take responsibility for the incident and state this to the family. You are the care teacher and are responsible for keeping children safe.
- Validate the parent’s feelings about the situation.
- Explain what you did to comfort and care for their child.
- Describe how you will work to prevent such incidents in the future, in particular steps you will take to ensure that you, or another responsible adult, is always available to directly supervise the children.
- Keep a current parent information board and distribute a monthly newsletter describing recent play and learning opportunities the children have experienced, upcoming curriculum plans and a message about child development or new care teaching strategies you have tried.
- Let parents know what resources you are using to stay current on child development and caregiving strategies. Be sure to make families aware of any professional early care and education associations that you belong to.
- Keep lines of communication open with the family.
Family child care teacher, Ms. Laura, is dealing with a string of biting incidents. The biting episodes seem to occur when Ms. Laura is out of the children’s direct line of sight, often during routine care. Recently, the family of Yuliana, 12 months, discovered teeth marks on Yuliana’s arm and leg. They were very upset and confronted Ms. Laura, accusing her of poor supervision and threatening to find another teacher if it happened again. Ms. Laura was unaware that the bites had occurred and is now extra careful to supervise the children.

Before the children arrived this morning, Ms. Laura prepared the meals and snacks for the day so she can supervise the children more closely. Ms. Laura and the children are playing in the family room which is accessible to the front door so Ms. Laura can greet arriving families and still supervise the children. Yuliana and Adriana, 13 months, play with several baskets of manipulative toys and Terrance, 14 months, is dumping and filling different containers with blocks.

Mrs. Sanborn arrives with Norah, 4 years. Ms. Laura greets them at the door and inquires about Norah’s morning. Ms. Laura notices Yuliana sitting next to Terrance and leaning over, but before Ms. Laura can call out to her, Yuliana bites Terrance. Ms. Laura immediately offers Terrance comfort. He is crying and says, “Ow” while holding his arm. Holding Terrance, Ms. Laura apologizes to Mrs. Sanborn, who has witnessed the incident, and quickly finishes the conversation. Knowing that Norah sometimes has trouble leaving her mom in the mornings, Ms. Laura engages Norah by asking if she’d like to help get a cold pack for Terrance. Ms. Laura then attends to Terrance’s arm.

Ms. Laura feels so bad that Terrance got hurt. During nap time, she plans how to discuss the incident with Terrance’s mother. Ms. Laura finds that she and the family both handle the situation better if she talks with the family before they arrive to pick up their child.

Ms. Laura prepares for the call by writing a list of what she needs to tell Terrance’s mother. The list includes saying that Terrance was bitten and after she comforted him and cleaned the bitten area, he played with blocks and the other children and is now taking his nap. Then she will explain what happened, remembering to maintain confidentiality, and genuinely apologize for not being able to protect him. She will express that she will keep a closer eye on Terrance.

Terrance’s mother’s first concern is whether Terrance is OK. Ms. Laura assures her that he is and describes how she comforted and cared for Terrance. His mother asks, “Haven’t other children been bitten recently too?” Ms. Laura replies, “There has been another biting incident. I have taken steps to help keep biting incidents from happening. The episode with Terrance today happened very quickly and I wasn’t able to stop it in time.” Terrance’s mother responds, “I appreciate your call. I will see you at pick-up time.”
Ms. Monique is a lead teacher in a 11 to 17 month-age classroom. According to the schedule, it is circle time. Ms. Monique gathers up the children who are engaged in free play. She has them put their toys down before going to the carpet for circle time, which makes some of them unhappy. She walks Lamar, 13 months, and Makayla, 16 months, to the carpeted area singing a made-up song, “Circle time, circle time, let’s go to the carpet for circle time.” Then she carries David, 11 months, who is almost asleep with his head laying on a stuffed animal, to circle time. Ms. Monique’s co-teacher gathers the other four children to the carpet.

Ms. Monique planned to read Brown Bear, Brown Bear by Eric Carle. She retrieves the book from the teacher’s shelf and sits with the children on the floor. David leans over putting his head on her knee and closes his eyes. Ms. Monique gently jiggles him quietly saying, “Wake up, David. It is circle time. I need you to look at the book.” She helps him sit up. She starts reading, animating her voice. After two pages, Lamar starts to crawl away followed by Lucy. Ms. Monique says, “No, no, Lamar, Lucy, you need to stay here and read with us.” She helps Lamar sit down; her co-teacher seats Lucy on her lap.

As she resumes reading, David lays his head down again. She jiggles him, he stirs, and she sits him up; he looks vacantly at the book. Lamar is off again. Ms. Monique can’t move this time as David has fallen asleep on her knee. The co-teacher now has two children on her lap helping them sit still. Ms. Monique calls for Lamar to come back but he continues to crawl away. Makayla and the other children were interested in the book but are getting antsy with the stopping and starting of the reading.

“I am interested in doing things I choose and I learn while I’m doing them. Circle time is not right for me.”
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Young children are curious learners and little scientists at work. They are eager to have hands-on experiences with a variety of interesting materials to manipulate and mouth. Their focus is on doing things they choose to do, when they choose to do them, and on having responsive care teachers to interact and celebrate their discoveries with. This is how young children are wired to learn. Teacher-directed group times (circle times) are not developmentally appropriate for young children and they should not be expected to participate in preschool activities. Young children have not yet developed the necessary skills to participate in group time such as sitting still and turn taking. Most importantly, young children are active learners who learn by doing. Children rely on you to provide appropriate materials, safe spaces, positive interaction and responsive care teaching to further their development. By doing these things, you will be preparing them for the learning that lies ahead.
Ask Yourself
• Why won’t the children sit still and listen at group time?
• How can the daily schedule meet individual children’s routine care needs and still offer opportunities to learn and play?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that young children gradually develop the ability to participate in teacher-led activities. Keep in mind that toddlers are not able to, and it is inappropriate to expect them to participate in preschool experiences such as group time.
★ Consider that mobile infants are usually interested in doing things they choose to do, which makes the learning more meaningful to them.
◆ Respect individual routine schedules. For example, allow the children to sleep when needed.
★ Engage children when they are awake and ready to play. David will learn more and enjoy looking at books with you when he is rested and shows an interest.
◆ Schedule the day with times for snacks and meals, and with plenty of time for the children to explore, play, and make choices indoors and outdoors.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
• How can I ensure that children have rich learning experiences?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that learning is most beneficial to mobile infants when they are free to make choices and explore their interests.
★ Assess how play and learning experiences and materials support child development, current and emerging skills and how they encourage children to explore and make discoveries.
★ Provide learning choices such as art materials, sensory experiences, active play, and outdoor play throughout the day. Be available to interact with children in multiple learning areas.
★ Allow children to come and go from experiences as they choose.
★ Avoid requiring children to follow external, adult-directed experiences. Respect children’s choices and follow their lead and interests.
**Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action**

Ms. Monique is a lead teacher in an 11 to 17 month-age classroom. A schedule posted on the wall indicates several times during the day when children choose from a variety of learning opportunities including art, exploring books, music, blocks, and active play using large muscles. Routine care, such as diapering and napping, is done on an individual basis. Free play in various learning areas in the room is always available to the children.

Lamar, 13 months, and Makayla, 16 months, are playing on the floor in an area filled with interesting action/reaction toys such as a pop-up-pal, a jack-in-the-box, a large push-button spinning top and a xylophone. David, 11 months, is resting in the book nook stocked with board, vinyl, and cloth books but he isn’t interested in the books. He lies with his head on a stuffed animal, gazing at the children playing nearby.

Knowing that it is almost time for David’s nap, Ms. Monique decides to attend to his needs. To help him prepare for his nap, she chooses the book *Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown from the children’s bookshelf. Sitting near him, offering her arms, she begins to read and he crawls onto her lap. When he wants to try to turn the pages by himself, she lets him. Sometimes he opens and closes the book, and Ms. Monique waits until he is ready for her to start reading again. When the book is finished, she cuddles him and settles him into his crib. She pats his stomach as his breathing becomes rhythmic.

Ms. Monique noticed Makayla glancing at her when she was reading to David and knows that Makayla is waiting for her. “Makayla, would you like to read a book?” asks Ms. Monique. Makayla nods her head, smiles and dashes to the book area still holding onto the xylophone. Ms. Monique, knowing how important exposing children to book-based experiences is, had prepared to offer *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle to the children interested in story time. She also gathered toy animals that are represented in the book in a basket for the children to hold and manipulate. She sees that Lamar is watching; she holds up the book and invites him to join them. Lamar looks at her but decides to keep playing on his own. Ms. Monique invites another child, who is wandering the room, to join them.

Ms. Monique sets the animals on the floor naming each one; each child chooses to hold several animals. *As she reads, the children turn the pages. Ms. Monique draws their attention to the toy animal when it appears in the book. Makayla repeats her animal’s name and taps it on the page of the book that pictures her animal.*

Lamar notices story time and comes over to investigate. He stands by Ms. Monique and points to the animal when a page is turned. Ms. Monique has an extra animal for him to hold. When the book is finished, Lamar gets another book from the bookshelf and hands it to her. She reads the title and the author, and turns the page to begin the story. Makayla has lost interest and takes her toy animals to another area of the room to play.

**Emotional Development:**
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

**Language & Communication Development:**
The child will demonstrate interest in book reading, story telling and singing and will eventually understand the meaning of basic symbols.

**Cognitive Development:**
The child will be able to remain focused on a task or object and to persist in the face of obstacles.
Lunchtime is finished in Ms. Janice’s mobile infant classroom and she is preparing the children for nap since she goes on her lunch break in 10 minutes. Ms. Janice is hurrying to get all of the children in their cribs or on their cots before the break staff, Ms. Hana, arrives. Amaya and Kenneth, both 16 months, are not cooperating with Ms. Janice. Amaya isn’t sleepy because she fell asleep earlier while the class was on a stroller ride and Kenneth has a hard time settling down because he is distracted by things going on in the classroom. Amaya and Kenneth are running in the middle of the room. Ms. Janice calls their names and tells them to go to their cots for nap time.

Amaya and Kenneth are still chasing each other around the carpeted area. Ms. Janice stops them mid-run, gently encircling them in her arms. She looks at each one and calmly says, “Nap time, please go to your cots.” Taking each one by the hand, she walks Amaya to her cot and Kenneth to his. Knowing that Amaya isn’t sleepy and will take a while to settle down, she decides to sit with Kenneth first to try to get him to sleep. She rubs his back trying to help him relax but then she needs to leave him and attend to Jackson, 13 months, who is crying in his crib. Jackson is tired but is having difficulty falling asleep.

By this time, Amaya is off her cot, sitting on the floor, playing with her blanket. Kenneth, imitating Amaya, is sitting on the floor putting the blanket on and off his head; both of them are giggling. Ms. Hana comes in to replace Ms. Janice for lunch. Ms. Janice hands a crying Jackson to Ms. Hana, and then she approaches Amaya and Kenneth, gently seating both of them on their cots. “You need to stay on your cots so Ms. Hana can help Jackson get to sleep,” says Ms. Janice. She covers them up, reminds them to stay on their cots and says, “Sleep tight. Ms. Hana is here. I’ll be back after nap time.”

"I’m not always tired at the same time as my friends. Consider what I need, please."
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Young children rapidly develop physically, emotionally and socially. They need to re-charge their bodies and minds to grow, explore, make discoveries, tackle new challenges and be ready for interactions with peers and adults. Naps provide a critical time for them to do just that. Each infant and toddler is a unique individual with his own needs for rest, including how long and when. This includes times for rest in child care programs. While older mobile infants may naturally nap at the same time, nap times should be based on each child’s needs and not on the clock. Encouraging group nap time based on the time of day is not in the best interest of the child. Remember, it is important to partner with families around any nap time issues.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What is an effective way to transition children to nap?

Give It a Try
◆ Plan ahead. Anticipating the routines and sleeping and napping schedules of mobile infants allows you to prepare for upcoming transitions and to help other children in the group engage in play before you have to attend to routine care.
◆ Modify schedules to accommodate the individual needs of children. Allow them to rest when they are sleepy, eat when they are hungry, and to play when they are awake and ready.
◆ Schedule Ms. Hana to arrive at the beginning of transitions. Ms. Janice can update her on the needs and status of the children and they can work together to meet children’s individual needs before Ms. Janice’s break.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What strategies can I use to help mobile infants prepare for rest or quiet play?

Give It a Try
◆ Arrange the environment to accommodate the needs of different children such as children who are ready for play and children who are resting.
◆ Provide a variety of materials of interest to children who are not sleepy while you conduct nap time routines with tired children.
◆ Establish a nap routine. Children will learn what comes next in the nap routine and begin to regulate their behavior. Ask Kenneth to get his favorite blanket from his cubby before Ms. Hana reads to him.
◆ Take time to help children drift to sleep. Rock Jackson, gently rub his stomach and sing a favorite lullaby. Allow plenty of time for routines and avoid rushing them.
◆ Ask children’s parents what they do at home to prepare their children for naps.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• How can I make nap time transitions peaceful for everyone?

Give It a Try
★ Be flexible and patient. Set appropriate expectations for infants of this age.
★ Recognize that Amaya’s needs are different than Kenneth’s and Jackson’s and require different care teaching strategies.
◆ Let children who are tired and easily distracted, as well as children who are tired but not ready for nap, have quiet time in the cozy area with books, plush animals and their security object if they aren’t ready to rest in their crib/cot.
◆ Practice primary care teaching. Determine which teacher will care for specific children so their needs are familiar to their care teacher and carried out in consistent ways. Keep teacher/child pairing consistent daily. Be open to helping your co-teacher when needed.
◆ Create a calm environment. Dim lights if possible, though the room must be light enough for easy supervision of children. If you use music, choose soothing, slow songs and play at a low volume.
◆ Provide safe bedding to support restful sleep.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

In Ms. Janice’s mobile infant classroom, she has finished feeding the children who are on similar schedules. Some children are getting tired and it is time to begin the transition to nap time. Ms. Hana, the break staff, will be joining Ms. Janice to help her with the transition. Ms. Hana comes in 30 minutes before Ms. Janice takes her lunch break.

Ms. Janice thinks about how to make the transition work for the children as well as for herself and Ms. Hana. She quickly updates the children’s daily records and in the process remembers that Amaya, 16 months, fell asleep on the stroller ride a short while ago and is not likely to be ready to nap again now. She selects toys from the storage closet that Amaya has not played with in a while to engage her in play so Ms. Janice and Ms. Hana can prepare the other children for nap. Ms. Janice places the toys on a rug a small distance away from the cots so she and Ms. Hana can supervise Amaya and the other children.

Ms. Janice quietly invites Amaya to the rug to see the new toys. “Amaya, here are some new toys I thought you might like. Ms. Hana will be coming soon too.” Amaya eagerly begins to explore the new toys.

Ms. Hana is Kenneth’s primary care teacher every day during nap transition and Ms. Janice cares for Jackson. Today, Ms. Janice has noticed Kenneth yawning, but he gets easily distracted and has a hard time settling down for nap. While caring for Jackson, Ms. Janice decides to help Kenneth prepare for nap until Ms. Hana arrives.

Ms. Janice says to Kenneth, “Let’s get your blanket then we can look at books.” He takes her hand and soon is settled in the cozy area. She offers Jackson a pacifier while he cuddles with his blanket in her arms. Jackson’s father suggested the pacifier may help him fall asleep.

Ms. Janice looks at several books with Kenneth as Jackson falls asleep. As she gets up to take Jackson to his crib, she tells Kenneth, “I will be right back. I’m laying Jackson in his crib.”

Ms. Janice, in clear sight of Kenneth and Amaya, gently rubs Jackson’s stomach to help him stay asleep. In the meantime, Ms. Hana arrives and greets Amaya and Kenneth. Ms. Janice quickly updates Ms. Hana mentioning that Amaya is unlikely to want to rest. Ms. Hana sits and cuddles with Kenneth.


Ms. Hana, noticing Amaya is losing interest in her “new” toys, invites Amaya to read with them. Ms. Hana continues to read to Kenneth until he starts sucking his thumb. This is her cue to transition him to his cot and sit with him as he goes to sleep. She continues singing lullabies and stroking his head, which relaxes him. Once he is asleep, Ms. Hana rejoins Amaya.

Emotional Development:
The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will participate in interactions with language that follow the expected practices of the child’s family and community.

Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her internal states and feelings, as well as stimulation from the outside world.
Ms. Yvonne is a family child care teacher and enjoys doing arts and crafts with the children. Ms. Yvonne helps Nick, 12 months, Gigi, 14 months, and Emmalyn, 27 months, get seated around the table. She tells them, “Don’t touch anything until we all are ready,” as she lays out the art materials. But Nick grabs the drawing paper in front of him and crinkles it up. Gigi reaches for the crayons and rips her paper in the process. Ms. Yvonne sighs and says, “Look at your papers. This is why I told you not to touch anything.” She gives them new pieces of paper and gives each child a few crayons. She states, “Remember the directions and draw only on the paper.”

Gigi scribbles and her marks go off of the paper and onto the table. She rips her paper with her hurried scribbling. Nick makes two short marks then puts the crayons in his mouth. Turning her attention to Nick first she says, “Crayons don’t go in your mouth. They go on the paper like this,” taking his hand and making marks on the paper. Turning to Gigi she states, “Remember what I said, you draw on the paper.” Emmalyn says to Ms. Yvonne, “Nick is eating crayon.” Ms. Yvonne, getting frustrated, takes the crayon out of his hand and says as she points to his paper, “Nick, that is dangerous. Draw on the paper.” Sitting next to Nick to watch him more closely, Ms. Yvonne observes Gigi drawing on the table. Sighing she says, “OK, Gigi. You are done drawing. Nick, you are too. Go play.” She gathers up their materials and helps them off of their chairs. She wonders how she can get them to follow the directions so art time can more enjoyable.

"Create play experiences that allow me to experience success."
Ms. Yvonne is a family child care teacher and enjoys doing arts and crafts with the children. Ms. Yvonne helps Nick, 12 months, Gigi, 14 months, and Emmalyn, 27 months, get seated around the table. She tells them, “Don’t touch anything until we all are ready,” as she lays out the art materials. But Nick grabs the drawing paper in front of him and crinkles it up. Gigi reaches for the crayons and rips her paper in the process. Ms. Yvonne sighs and says, “Look at your papers. This is why I told you not to touch anything.” She gives them new pieces of paper and gives each child a few crayons. She states, “Remember the directions and draw only on the paper.”

Gigi scribbles and her marks go off of the paper and onto the table. She rips her paper with her hurried scribbling. Nick makes two short marks then puts the crayons in his mouth. Turning her attention to Nick first she says, “Crayons don’t go in your mouth. They go on the paper like this,” taking his hand and making marks on the paper. Turning to Gigi she states, “Remember what I said, you draw on the paper.” Emmalyn says to Ms. Yvonne, “Nick is eating crayon.” Ms. Yvonne, getting frustrated, takes the crayon out of his hand and says as she points to his paper, “Nick, that is dangerous. Draw on the paper.” Sitting next to Nick to watch him more closely, Ms. Yvonne observes Gigi drawing on the table. Sighing she says, “OK, Gigi. You are done drawing. Nick, you are too. Go play.” She gathers up their materials and helps them off of their chairs. She wonders how she can get them to follow the directions so art time can more enjoyable.

Infants and toddlers develop skills in their own way and at their own pace. It is for these reasons that care teachers need to continually observe each child and record the child’s interests, skills the child is practicing, and new skills that are emerging. Select materials that offer children the opportunity to make discoveries, that can be used in different ways, and that encourage children to participate and engage in problem solving. Select materials that support a child’s current and emerging skills and interests to enhance that child’s emotional, motor (muscle) and cognitive development. Your interaction during children’s play and learning contributes to their social and language/communication development as well.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can the beginning of art time be a more positive experience?

Give It a Try
★ Determine if play and learning experiences are of interest to each child and appropriate for their age and abilities.
★ Decide if the experiences should be done individually or in a small group.
▲ Be prepared. Allow children to help set up materials or have materials ready before children become engaged.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What are appropriate expectations concerning mobile infants’ ability to follow directions?
• What strategies can I use to make play and learning experiences enjoyable, safe and appropriate?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that the ability to follow simple one-step directions begins to develop in toddlerhood.
★ Keep in mind that mobile infants have not developed the ability to manage their behavior and impulse control. These skills develop with age and teacher guidance.
★ Set appropriate expectations. Infants and young toddlers explore materials in many ways, including mouthing them. Nick, who is still in the stage of development in which he places materials in his mouth, will be unable to follow directions to keep the crayons out of his mouth.
▲ Provide age appropriate experiences. Nick may be too young to use crayons safely, but there are other materials and experiences he can safely explore.
› Offer materials that match and support a child’s ability. Provide Gigi with a large piece of paper to make her crayon markings.
› Ready the environment. Tape paper to the table during art experiences. Have materials ready ahead of time to limit waiting.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Yvonne is a family child care teacher and enjoys doing arts and crafts with the children. Knowing Nick, 12 months, puts many objects in his mouth, she feels that today’s art experience may not be appropriate for him. She knows he likes playing with different sizes and types of bowls and lids and using objects to put into and take out of them. She gathers these materials together and plans to offer them to him when the other children are offered art.

Ms. Yvonne notes that Gigi, 14 months, recently began using crayons and enjoys scribbling. Emmalyn, 27 months, enjoys drawing with crayons and markers too. Ms. Yvonne thinks the art experience today will be enjoyable and a learning opportunity for both of them. Gigi tends to scribble quickly and with big strokes. Due to her age, she isn’t able to follow directions consistently such as drawing only on the paper. To protect the table surface and enable Gigi to use art materials within her abilities, Ms. Yvonne has made accommodations for her. She tapes a piece of paper inside of an old baking sheet. This way Gigi’s scribbling marks the paper and the pan and not the table. The pan also keeps the crayons from rolling way.

Ms. Yvonne place the crayons, paper and Gigi’s art pan on the table and lets the children know that the art materials are out if they want to draw. Gigi and Emmalyn sit down at the table and begin scribbling and drawing. Nick, who never misses the actions of the older children, joins them at the art table. “Nick, look what I have for you,” says Ms. Yvonne sitting the selection of bowls and accessories on the floor near her so he has plenty of room to play. Nick smiles and sits on the floor setting different lids on different bowls, filling bowls with items and dumping them into other bowls.

Gigi scribbles hurriedly, her crayon hitting the edge of the pan. Because the paper edges are taped completely around the border, the paper doesn’t rip when Gigi moves her crayon back and forth. She smiles and laughs as she is scribbling, occasionally looking at Ms. Yvonne. Ms. Yvonne responds, “Look at all of the orange lines. Oh, there is a wavy line,” she says pointing to the wavy line. Gigi chooses a brown crayon and scribbles some more.
Ms. Leeza cares for Manuel, 14 months, in her family child care program. This morning Manuel is interested in the play food from the dramatic play area. He picks up a piece of “food,” walks it to the couch and lays it down. He repeats this process several more times making a pile of “food.” Ms. Leeza notices the pile and says, “Manuel, the food doesn’t go on the couch, it goes in the kitchen.” She scoops the “food” up and returns it to the play kitchen. Manuel fusses when it is put away. “You can play with them. You just need to keep them here,” she says referring to the dramatic play area. “Why don’t you play with the pegboard?” asks Ms. Leeza setting out the pegboard on the table.

Manuel stands at the table and removes a few pegs from the pegboard. He notices a shape sorter sitting on the table next to him and begins to drop pegs through the holes of the shape sorter. Ms. Leeza sits down next to him and says, “Pegs don’t go in the shape sorter, they go in the pegboard.” She removes the pegs from the sorter, replaces them in the pegboard and remarks, “See, they go here.” Ms. Leeza puts the shape sorter back on the shelf. Manuel gets the shape sorter and shakes it, trying to get the shapes out. Unable to open it, he drops it to the floor and walks away.
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Young children are naturally curious. They learn best when allowed freedom to safely act on their curiosity. Exploring and experimenting with a variety of objects in different ways and settings is one way to feed a child’s curiosity. Children need the opportunity to make discoveries on their own, to see what works and how things work. Following their own curiosity informs children’s thinking and shapes their learning and future development – even as adults. Advancements in science, technology, medicine, and education are dependent on persons following their curiosity and experimenting with materials in new and different ways. Encouraging curiosity is encouraging learning and discovery.
Ask Yourself

- Why doesn’t Manuel play pretend with the toy food?
- What does Manuel find interesting about moving materials around?

Give It a Try

★ Recognize that mobile infants have not yet developed the ability to participate in pretend play.
★ Appreciate that young children learn as they move. They enjoy and learn from exploring their environment, using their bodies to move about and manipulate materials.
★ Keep in mind that children learn and find pleasure from experiences they create.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

- What are the benefits of allowing children to mix different play materials and take them to different settings?
- How can I support Manuel in exploring materials?

Give It a Try

› Recognize that materials have multiple uses and each experience the child creates with the materials is important to support learning.
★ Keep in mind that children are using problem solving skills and learning about cause and effect, spatial relations, grouping and categorizing, and imitation when playing with different materials in a variety of ways and settings.
★ Be aware that children may spend more time focusing on things they find interesting, which in turn may increase their ability to attend to and persist in a task.
› Offer a variety of materials that can be used in play and learning opportunities.
★ Encourage children’s interests, discoveries and creativity.
★ Join in children’s play. Talk about their ideas and ask questions.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Leeza cares for Manuel, 14 months, in her family child care program. This morning Manuel is interested in the play food from the dramatic play area. He picks up a piece of “food,” walks it to the couch and lays it down. Ms. Leeza observes Manuel repeat this process several more times making a pile of “food.” She says, “Manuel, look at all of your groceries.” Manuel makes two more trips for “food.”

Ms. Leeza sits down on the couch, extends her hand to Manuel and asks, “May I have one?” He puts a “tomato” in her hand. “Thank you for the red tomato. May I have something else?” she asks as she lays the “tomato” in her lap. Manuel and Ms. Leeza continue this interaction. Once Manuel has given her all of the “food” from his pile she asks, “Do you want the brown potato?” He takes it when offered to him. The exchange of giving “food” back to Manuel continues until he has all of the food back.

Manuel starts the exchange process again until Ms. Leeza says, “Manuel, I have to feed Ellie. I’ll get you a metal bowl and a shoebox if you want to put your food in one of them.” She retrieves these items from the toy shelf and sits them on the floor by Manuel. He places “food” in the bowl one at a time.

Losing interest, he sees the pegboard and shape sorter on the table. He removes the pegs from the pegboard and drops them through the holes of the shape sorter. Ms. Leeza watches Manuel as she feeds Ellie. Manuel looks at Ms. Leeza and smiles. Returning his smile she says, “Where are the pegs?” Manuel looks into the holes of the shape sorter. He picks up the sorter and shows it to her. “I see the pegs in there.” Once he has put all of the pegs in the shape sorter, he shakes it. Occasionally he looks into the holes and shakes it again. He inserts his fingers into the holes trying to reach the pegs. After several tries, he brings the shape sorter to Ms. Leeza who helps him open it.

Social Development:
The child will engage in give-and-take exchanges with an adult.

Cognitive Development:
The child will understand how things move and fit in space.

Cognitive Development:
The child will use the self, objects or others to attain a goal.
I Know I Should...Keep Toys, Activity Areas Open All Day

Ms. Cheyenne is a care teacher for children 3 months to 18 months. She believes an organized and uncluttered room helps the mobile infants find materials to play with and keeps the floor clear for them to move about safely. Now that a majority of the children are mobile, they move and play in all of the learning areas. She spends a great deal of time picking up and re-shelving many toys scattered throughout the room.

To reduce the amount of clutter, Ms. Cheyenne decides to slide two toy shelves together to block off the dramatic play area and turns shelves of manipulatives so the children don’t have access to those materials. She plans to keep a few large bins of manipulatives out for the children to play with. She will make the dramatic play materials, as well as different manipulatives, accessible in the afternoon when she plans to close off the block and music areas.

When 17-month-old Manny arrives, he heads straight to the dramatic play area. He stops when he sees it is blocked off. He tries to fit through the space between the two shelves, and then tries to climb over it. “Manny, feet on the floor,” calls Ms. Cheyenne, “We aren’t playing in there this morning.” Manny replies, “Baby.” Ms. Cheyenne responds, “You can play with the baby doll later. Come play with the puzzle.” Manny doesn’t move and continues to try to squeeze through the joined shelves.

Lilly Rose, 14 months, sits down by the big bins of links, snap beads and vehicles. She tries to connect two links but can’t. Next, she picks up the snap beads but can’t snap them together. She dumps both bins and attempts to stand in them. She falls spilling the bin of vehicles.

Ms. Cheyenne realizes this new arrangement isn’t working so far. The mobile infants aren’t engaging in play with the accessible materials, there is still a mess, and some of the children, such as Manny, are frustrated.

“Letting me choose and explore things when I am interested in them is how I learn best.”
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Ongoing access to materials, equipment, and experiences that interest children significantly contributes to their ability to engage in complex play. Children follow their drive to explore materials and discover what they can make happen. They also combine materials to make new discoveries and extend their learning. If materials are often not accessible to children for long periods of time, the children’s opportunities for learning are greatly diminished.
Ask Yourself

- Why do children need access to a variety of materials throughout the day?
- How can I manage to keep an organized and safe environment?

Give It a Try

★ Recognize that play experiences with a variety of materials support current and emerging developmental skills.
★ Understand that children learn best when they choose materials they are interested in. This may help them stay engaged in play longer too.
★ Keep in mind that making different materials available from different learning areas gives children opportunities to extend their learning.
★ Recognize that young children have an interest in dumping materials. It is a developmentally appropriate activity for mobile infants.
★ Distribute materials throughout a well-arranged and equipped classroom to support children’s exploration and discovery interests.
★ Make a manageable number of materials accessible to children. Too many items can be overwhelming, can make play areas congested, and can interfere with play. Provide enough items to minimize conflict among children.
★ Use small to medium size baskets and bins without lids for items with multiple pieces. Set individual toys directly on shelves without crowding them. Store like materials together.
★ Include children in the clean-up process. Consider each child’s developing ability to participate in cleaning up. Have appropriate expectations and focus on the learning process, rather than the end result of organized toys and space.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

- How can I provide rich learning experiences?

Give It a Try

★ Keep in mind that children need respectful, responsive interactions with adults, contact with peers, and access to a variety of materials to support their learning and development.
★ Offer a variety of interesting and developmentally appropriate toys for the varying skill levels of children. Materials and equipment should be challenging enough for children to practice emerging skills, but not too challenging.
★ Allow play experiences to unfold naturally, providing uninterrupted time for meaningful play.
★ Recognize that children communicate through nonverbal behaviors. Care teachers need to read behavioral cues and respond accordingly.
★ Get to know each child’s specific interests, likes and dislikes.
Ms. Cheyenne is a care teacher for children 3 months to 18 months. She believes an organized and uncluttered room helps the mobile infants find materials to play with and she keeps the floor clear for them to move about safely. Now that a majority of the children are mobile, they move and play in all of the learning areas. She spends a great deal of time picking up and re-shelving many toys scattered throughout the room.

Knowing that children learn best by having access to a variety of materials that support a range of developmental skills, Ms. Cheyenne decides to let the children have access to all of the learning areas instead of restricting their access during the day. Even so, she is still faced with the issue of clutter throughout the room, which is also a safety hazard. She decides to reduce the amount of items in the toy bins and to place individual toys on the shelves, instead of storing several sets in a bin, to see if this change will make a difference.

When 17-month-old Manny arrives, he heads straight to the dramatic play area. He lays his favorite baby doll on the table and wraps her in a blanket. While looking for the doll’s bottle, he tosses play food out of the bin. Before the change, Ms. Cheyenne would have removed half of the play food and put those items in storage to rotate into play for another day and there would have been a big mess to clean up. Now, there are just a few items on the floor. Ms. Cheyenne says, “Manny, you dropped some food.” Ms. Cheyenne puts a couple of the play food items back and hands one to Manny saying, “Here Manny, let’s put this food away. Then you can feed your baby.” Manny puts the items in the bin. Ms. Cheyenne puts most of the items away, but Manny helps and is learning the process of cleaning up. With a small number of items, the clean-up task isn’t overwhelming for Manny. He then sits in the child-size chair, holding and feeding his baby doll.

Lilly Rose, 14 months, pulls the bin of snap beads off of the shelf. Ms. Cheyenne has removed all of the snap beads but ten, so there is little mess. Ms. Cheyenne observes Lilly Rose attempting to snap them together without success. Knowing that pulling the beads apart is about the right amount of developmental challenge for Lilly Rose, Ms. Cheyenne joins her in play. She says, “Those are difficult to snap together. I’ll snap them together and you can pull them apart.” As Lilly Rose pulls a bead off while Ms. Cheyenne holds onto the other bead, she giggles. She hands the bead back to Ms. Cheyenne and says, “More.” This exchange is repeated several times.

Lilly Rose loses interests in the game, drops the beads, and reaches for the stacking cup set on the nearby shelf. Several stacking cup sets used to be stored in a bin, which made a lot of clutter when dumped. Seeing Lilly Rose concentrating on exploring how the stacking cups fit into each other, Ms. Cheyenne avoids interrupting her and reshelves the snap beads. She knows that learning to clean up is an important skill, but there will be many opportunities for Lilly Rose to practice it. For now, Lilly Rose is busy learning.
Ms. Jessica and Ms. Melissa are care teachers in a mobile infant room. They know the children are supposed to play outside every day. But following the children’s individual schedules makes getting children outside all at once a challenge. As a result, there are often several days between visits to the playground.

In the afternoon, the teachers discuss going outside since it seems that all the children will be awake and ready for play. Ms. Jessica opens the window to check to see if it is warm enough to go outside on this fall day. The breeze is very chilly and it is rather windy. Ms. Jessica and Ms. Melissa don’t like to go out if it is too cold. It takes a lot of time to put the children’s coats on and the teachers get cold watching the children play.

Instead of going outside, the teachers decide to play music so the children can dance for large muscle play.

“It’s beneficial when you respect both my individual schedule and my need to play outside.”
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Frequent opportunities for outdoor play enable children to learn about themselves, what they can do, what they want to do, and what they feel, see, hear and smell. Outdoor time also provides them with the opportunity to experience cause and effect relationships in nature, for example, by seeing and hearing wind blowing the leaves off of a tree or the sun warming their face. Children’s experiences with nature in the outside environment give teachers many opportunities to build language skills and begins to lay the foundation for science concepts by helping children to group and categorize elements around them. It is important to remember that taking children on buggy rides should not be used to replace outside playtime and restricting children’s movements outdoors by placing them in seats or other infant equipment does not provide the learning opportunities and experiences they need for healthy development.
Ask Yourself
• How can I meet children's individual needs and still find time to take them outside to play?

Give It a Try
♦ Review each child’s typical daily routine schedule and note blocks of time when small groups of children have their routine needs met at the same time. Use these times to bring small groups of children outside.
♦ Go outside twice a day. The amount of time spent outside doesn’t have to be the same for morning and afternoon outdoor play.
♦ Take children outside in small groups at separate times.

Give It a Try Key
▲ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
★ = Environment & Materials  ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Ask Yourself
• How does weather play a role in deciding about going outside?
• What are the benefits of outdoor play?
• What strategies help with providing outdoor play?

Give It a Try
♦ Consider it is best practice to take children outside unless there is active rain, snow or a public health advisory.
♦ Make sure to give children enough time outside for large motor play.
♦ Adjust how long to stay outside depending on weather conditions.
♦ Dress children and yourself appropriately for the weather.
★ Recognize that outdoor play provides an environment for children to explore and make discoveries that are different from those provided by an indoor environment.
♦ Join in play with the children during their time outside to extend and encourage their learning and exploration.
★ Be aware that exposure to outdoor environments supports children’s physical health. Fresh air and sunlight are important to a child’s overall health, even when a child is ill. Of course, always follow the doctor’s advice.
♦ Provide material and equipment to support large muscle development.
♦ Organize coats and hats so children can be dressed quickly. Have all items ready to take outside before dressing the children.
♦ Get children ready to go outside one at a time or in very small groups. As children get dressed for the weather, offer a transition item such as a book.
♦ Arrange for an extra care teacher to assist with transitions.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Jessica and Ms. Melissa work in the mobile infant room. To ensure the children get outdoor playtime twice a day, they focus on taking children out in small groups at different times if needed. The mobile infants are cared for based on their own needs and schedules so it can be challenging to get outside. The teachers understand that outdoor play is important to children’s development. It also gives them a space to explore that is different and ever-changing. Also fresh air, even in the winter, helps to keep everyone healthy.

The teachers have informed parents that the children go outside every day and need appropriate clothing. The program has spare clothing that parents contributed when their children outgrew items. So if a child needs clothing, it is available. Some parents expressed concern that their child will catch a cold or that a child’s existing cold will get worse. They requested their child not go out. The teachers created a parent handout using information from *Caring for Our Children-National Health and Safety Performance Standards* to share research that states the health benefits and weather conditions for outdoor play. They also talked with the parents on the developmental benefits of outdoor time. They reassured parents that they monitor the weather and the children’s well-being while outside and return indoors early if necessary.

A few children have finished their morning routine care. There is approximately 45 minutes before some of the children will need to be fed again. Ms. Jessica opens the window to check the weather and realizes it is a windy and chilly fall day. The infants will need winter coats, hats and gloves. Ms. Jessica puts her coat and hat on then dresses a couple of the infants. Ms. Melissa lends a hand and dresses another. Ms. Melissa will take the remaining children outside in approximately 20 minutes after their routine needs are met. The teachers are careful to stay in ratio and to meet group size standards.

Outside, Eli, 9 months, crawls across the grass stopping at leaves blowing in front of him. He reaches out to them as they blow by. Gavin, 13 months, pushes a push-car down the sidewalk coming to an abrupt halt when the car hits the grassy edge. Ms. Jessica says, “The grass stopped you. Let me help you over the bump.” She places the push-car on the grass and Gavin pushes the car, though with more effort due to the rough surface. But Gavin figures it out and drives around the yard. He picks up a twig of leaves and sets it on the car’s seat for the remainder of his drive. Ms. Jessica talks to Eli, “Those leaves are swirling around you.” Eli sits down and Ms. Jessica hands him a leaf. He tries to put it into his mouth, but Ms. Jessica gently stops him. She holds a leaf and says, “Eli, watch it fly away,” as she lets go. Eli watches it fly away. He opens his hand and his leaf takes off in the wind.
I Know I Should...Offer Creative Arts

Ms. Tamara and Ms. Corrine care for infants and toddlers in a multi-age classroom. Currently they are struggling to find ways to manage offering creative arts experiences. The toddlers tend to handle the art materials well. Of course, Ms. Tamara closely supervises and provides assistance if needed. The mobile infants, ages 12 months to 18 months, are more challenging during art activities.

At art time, Ms. Tamara helps the younger mobile infants into their feeding chairs with trays so they can’t wander about with the materials. The older mobile infants sit at the child-size table. Ms. Tamara gives each child one green crayon in honor of St. Patrick’s Day. The teachers are planning to cut shamrocks out of the children’s green scribbling paper.

Leah, 15 months, happily starts making marks on her paper. Then her marks go off of the paper and onto the table. She rips her paper with her hurried scribbling. Hayden, 10 months, puts the crayon in his mouth. Charlie, 11 months, hasn’t touched the crayon and slid his paper onto the floor. Kylie, 16 months, is peeling the paper off of her green crayon and dropping the bits of paper onto the floor.

Ms. Tamara turns her attention first to Hayden, “Crayons don’t go in your mouth. They go on the paper like this,” she says taking his hand and making marks on the paper. Hayden gets mad when she takes the crayon out of his mouth. Turning to Kylie she states, “Quit peeling the paper and draw.” Ms. Tamara swaps the crayon for one that doesn’t have a paper wrapper on it. Kylie yells, “My, my,” reaching for the crayon Ms. Tamara removed. She sees Hayden with the crayon back in his mouth and Leah still making marks on the table. Charlie is trying to get out of his feeding chair, his crayon untouched.

Ms. Tamara notices Ms. Corrine is busy changing a diaper and can’t help. Ms Tamara sighs and says, “All done, we are all done,” as she hastily picks up the crayons and papers. She realizes that these “drawings” won’t be very pretty shamrocks, and that Hayden and Charlie won’t have anything to hang up.

“Creating experiences for me that are both appropriate and interesting takes thoughtful planning.”

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Ms. Tamara turns her attention first to Hayden, “Crayons don’t go in your mouth. They go on the paper like this,” she says taking his hand and making marks on the paper. Hayden gets mad when she takes the crayon out of his mouth. Turning to Kylie she states, “Quit peeling the paper and draw.” Ms. Tamara swaps the crayon for one that doesn’t have a paper wrapper on it. Kylie yells, “My, my,” reaching for the crayon Ms. Tamara removed. She sees Hayden with the crayon back in his mouth and Leah still making marks on the table. Charlie is trying to get out of his feeding chair, his crayon untouched.

Ms. Tamara notices Ms. Corrine is busy changing a diaper and can’t help. Ms. Tamara sighs and says, “All done, we are all done,” as she hastily picks up the crayons and papers. She realizes that these “drawings” won’t be very pretty shamrocks, and that Hayden and Charlie won’t have anything to hang up.

Creative arts for young children are about exploring and manipulating art materials, rather than about creating pieces of art. Allowing children to make discoveries with appropriate art materials provides them with more opportunities to learn from the experience than when the art activity is predesigned and scripted. Just as we offer them opportunities to play with puzzles, books and blocks throughout the day, children can benefit from repeated opportunities to engage in art experiences. Consider that the use of art materials requires sufficient eye-hand coordination and self-control. Very young children who are only beginning to develop self-control may put materials into their mouths. Art may not be appropriate for them. Frequent observation of children using materials helps to determine their abilities and the types of art materials they can safely handle. Examples of appropriate art materials include non-toxic crayons, non-toxic finger paint, large non-toxic chalk, chalkboard, and a variety of paper. For older toddlers, try offering water color markers, a variety of painting tools, easy to use blunt scissors, and play dough with simple tools.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction
★ = Child Development & Interest
★ = Environment & Materials
◆ = Caregiving Routine

**Take Another Look**

**Ask Yourself**
- What are appropriate ages for children to engage in art?
- What are guidelines for infant and toddler art experiences?

**Give It a Try**
- Keep in mind potential safety hazards when choosing art materials. Safety always takes priority. Follow safety warnings, age recommendations, and directions on art materials.
- Recognize that young children learn about objects by exploring them with their mouths, which is not suitable with art materials.
- Determine if art experiences are of interest to each child and appropriate for their age and abilities.
- Acknowledge that art is about the process of exploring materials, what children learn, and how it supports their development. It is not about the finished products.
- Remember that art is not the use of coloring sheets, pre-printed pictures or papers that are cut out to resemble an item that the children are to draw/paint on.
- Offer daily art experiences and let children come and go as they desire. Do not require children to participate.

**Keep Watching**

**Ask Yourself**
- What are appropriate expectations concerning a mobile infant’s ability to participate in art?

**Give It a Try**
- Remember that mobile infants manipulate objects to learn about them. This includes art materials.
- Be aware that if materials pose a potential hazard or materials are being damaged during a mobile infant’s exploration, the art experience is not suitable.
- Recognize that mobile infants have not developed the ability to manage their behavior and impulse control. These skills develop with age and teacher guidance.

**Watch Some More**

**Ask Yourself**
- What are strategies for offering appropriate art experiences for mobile infants?

**Give It a Try**
- Decide if the experiences should be done individually or in a small group of 2-3 children.
- Offer art to a mixed age group of mobile infants and toddlers so your attention can be focused on children who need more assistance, such as the mobile infants.
- Ready the environment. Tape blank paper to the table before children begin their work.
- Provide a variety of age appropriate materials. Give children 2-3 different colors of crayons to choose from. Being able to make choices expands children’s learning and allows for creativity.
- Adapt materials to support a child’s ability. Provide Leah with a large piece of paper to capture her crayon markings.
- Respect a child’s art. Children are proud of what they do. Do not cut or manipulate what they produce to create something else. The child’s art is the finished product.
Ms. Tamara and Ms. Corrine care for infants and toddlers in a multi-age classroom. They provide daily art opportunities for toddlers and some of the mobile infants who can manage to use the materials safely. Older toddlers have access to crayons and a variety of paper throughout the day.

The teachers, understanding child development and concerns over health and safety, have decided not to offer art opportunities to Hayden, 10 months, and Charlie, 12 months. Last week, Ms. Corrine offered Charlie a crayon to see if he was interested in exploring what he could do with it, but he immediately put it into his mouth. Hayden and Charlie have access to a variety of rattles and other manipulatives to support their small muscle development. These items also expose them to a variety of textures for sensory experiences. Such materials offer the benefits of art experiences but are safer for young children.

Earlier, Ms. Tamara taped drawing paper to the bottoms of used baking sheets the families donated. This way, the children are scribbling marks on the paper and onto the pan and not the table. It provides a boundary so children are free to enjoy the experience without having to be reminded not to draw on the table. In addition, the surfaces are protected and the pan also keeps the crayons from rolling away. Before Ms. Tamara used cookie sheets as drawing surfaces, she used the inside of the lids to gift boxes.

Ms. Tamara glances around the room and sees Kylie, 16 months, intently engaged in experimenting with two sets of stacking cups. She doesn’t want to disturb her and will offer her art later. Leah, seeing the art materials, approaches the table. Ms. Tamara says to her, “Would you like to draw with crayons?” Leah reaches for the drawing pan. “Do you want to sit down?” asks Ms. Tamara, scooting out the child-size chair. Leah pushes the chair in toward the table and says, “No.” Ms. Tamara offers a small container of crayons that are in good shape and asks, “What color crayons do you want?” Leah looks in the container, pulls out a crayon, and then reaches in for two more. Ms. Tamara says, “Choose one more, then I’ll put the crayons away.” Leah grabs two, which Ms. Tamara considers appropriate. There are plenty of crayons and Leah is too young to understand the concept of “one” and to follow this type of rule. That understanding will develop over time.

Leah scribbles hurriedly, her crayon hitting the edge of the pan. Because the paper edges are taped completely around the border to the pan, the paper doesn’t rip when she moves her crayon back and forth. Leah stops, smiles and looks at Ms. Tamara. Ms. Tamara, reading Leah’s cues, smiles and replies, “You made many black marks,” pointing to the markings. Leah smiles back and scribbles more black marks.

Kylie joins Leah. Ms. Tamara had her choose crayons and a drawing pan. Kylie begins to pick at the crayon’s wrapper. Ms. Tamara had forgotten that Kylie is persistent with this. Ms. Tamara has some crayons without the wrapper that Kylie likes. After swapping crayons with Ms. Tamara, Kylie makes red markings on her paper.
Ms. Whitney and Ms. Diana are care teachers for a group of mobile infants ages 12 to 24 months. The teachers love caring for the children and enjoy their roles as care teachers. Their days are filled with ensuring that all of the children’s routine care needs are met, providing play experiences, and fulfilling their other duties. Some days they are so busy it feels like they have little quality time to spend with each child.

The teachers know it is best practice to implement primary caregiving, in which each teacher primarily cares for the same small group of children every day. But they are concerned that the children will get too attached to them and that they will get too attached to the children. So whenever a child needs to be fed, diapered or transitioned to nap, the teacher who is available at that time cares for the child.

Miranda, 13 months, is getting tired. She crawls to Ms. Diana who is changing Derrick’s diaper. Miranda pulls to a stand holding onto Ms. Diana’s leg. Ms. Diana says, “Hi, Miranda. Did you come to see me? I’m changing Derrick’s diaper.” Miranda rubs her face against Ms. Diana’s leg. “Are you getting tired?” asks Ms. Diana. She asks Ms. Whitney if she can put Miranda down for a nap. “I’ll try, but she goes to sleep more easily with you,” responds Ms. Whitney. Ms. Whitney holds Miranda like Ms. Diana does and sings the same song, but Miranda fusses and can’t get comfortable in Ms. Whitney’s arms.

Ms. Diana, finished with changing Derrick’s diaper, hears Hazel, 11 months, crying. She checks Hazel’s daily record sheet and realizes Hazel is probably hungry so she prepares Hazel’s cereal. Repeatedly Hazel takes a bite, but spits it back out. Ms. Diana says, “Ms. Whitney, Hazel must not be hungry. She keeps spitting out her cereal.” Ms. Whitney replies, “The cereal is probably too thin. She likes it thicker lately.” Ms. Diana remakes the cereal and Hazel eagerly eats. Ms. Whitney continues to try helping Miranda fall asleep.
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A primary care teacher is an early childhood professional with the education, training, and experience to support the learning, development, and nurturance of children birth to 36 months of age. The primary care teacher has the principal responsibility for providing and coordinating the care (including safety, health, development, learning and emotional well-being) of specific or assigned infants and toddlers and for building a partnership with the children’s families. Primary caregiving is not exclusive caregiving and works best when infant care teachers support each other as a team.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why is a young child’s attachment to a primary care teacher so important?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that building and maintaining a secure and respectful relationship lays the foundation for future learning. Young children are best able to build secure relationships when cared for by a few, consistent care providers.
★ Recognize that a secure attachment with a care teacher encourages a child to explore, to discover, and to learn, and supports that child’s developing identity.
★ Acknowledge that a secure attachment to a primary care teacher is critical to the emotional development of children.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What are the benefits of primary caregiving?
• What does primary care teaching involve?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that young children prefer and need to be cared for in a consistent way by a person they trust. The personal familiarity helps the child feel comfortable and confident in the care.
◆ Realize that primary care teachers enjoy a special connection with their primary care group. For example, Ms. Whitney not only knows how Hazel prefers her cereal, she enjoys interacting with her during mealtime.
◆ Recognize that primary caregiving is caring for the whole child, not completing specific tasks for many children.
◆ Consider that learning each child’s individual needs, temperament, likes/dislikes and development is simpler in primary caregiving with a small group. For example, Miranda would consistently be helped to sleep by Ms. Diana who understands her nap time needs and who is able to comfort her.
◆ Identify the children to be cared for in small groups by designated, consistent teachers. Primary care teachers build secure relationships with specific children, provide mainly routine care for those children, support the children’s development and learning, and create partnerships with each child’s family.
◆ Acknowledge that primary caregiving is not exclusive. It is not about caring for “just your children.” It works best when teachers support each other as a team.
◆ Use caregiving routines to get to know the infants as individuals. Routine care is a great opportunity to support development and to build and strengthen your relationship.
◆ Communicate with co-teachers, verbally and by documentation, throughout the day. Take time to update co-teachers and break staff on changes in a child’s typical schedule/routine.
▲ Ask for assistance when needed. Offer help to other co-teachers when you see it is needed.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Whitney and Ms. Diana are care teachers for a group of mobile infants ages 12 to 24 months. The teachers love caring for the children and enjoy their roles as care teachers. Their days are filled with ensuring that all of the children’s routine care needs are met, providing play experiences, and fulfilling their other duties of program planning and cleaning their room.

Some days the teachers are extraordinarily busy, but because they use primary caregiving, they still feel able to spend quality time with each child in their primary group. Before they practiced primary caregiving they spent a lot of time organizing and managing care for the whole group. They both always seemed to be trying to keep up with all of the children’s needs.

Miranda, 13 months, is getting tired. She crawls to Ms. Diana who is changing Derrick’s diaper. Miranda pulls to a stand holding onto Ms. Diana’s leg. Ms. Diana says, “Hi, Miranda. Did you come to see me? I’m changing Derrick’s diaper.” Miranda rubs her face against Ms. Diana’s leg. “Are you getting tired? I will help you get ready for nap as soon as I care for Derrick,” says Ms. Diana.

Ms. Diana talks with Derrick while finishing his diaper change and also talks with Miranda who is still by her side. Ms. Diana calls to Ms. Whitney, “Would you please help Miranda? I’m afraid she is going fall when I move. I need to wash Derrick’s hands and clean the diapering table and then I’ll help her get ready for nap.” Ms. Diana says to Miranda, “Ms. Whitney is going to hold you until I wash my hands. Then I’ll be right over to get you.” Ms. Whitney lets Miranda know she is going to pick her up so as not to startle her. Ms. Whitney then says to Miranda, “Let’s see what Hazel is playing with until Ms. Diana is ready.”

Miranda, sitting on Ms. Whitney’s lap, doesn’t engage in play because she is tired, but she is watching Hazel, 11 months, play. After getting Derrick settled into play, Ms. Diana picks up Miranda and says, “Now, how about a nap?” Ms. Diana positions her in a way Miranda likes and very soon Miranda is drifting off. Ms. Diana lays her in her crib.

As mealtime approaches, Ms. Whitney realizes it is about the time when Hazel starts getting hungry. She prepares the cereal, making it thicker, which Hazel now prefers. Hazel crawls to Ms. Whitney, who is preparing Hazel’s food, and happily babbles. “Are you telling me you are hungry? Well, your lunch is ready,” responds Ms. Whitney. Hands are washed and Hazel is fed.

Language & Communication Development: The child will convey a message or transfer information to another person.

Emotional Development: The child will form relationships with consistent caregivers.
I Know I Should...Individualize Routines

Ms. Colette cares for a group of children that range in age from 12 to 24 months. She would like all of the children to be on the same nap schedule. She is aware that in this age range children usually start transitioning to one long afternoon nap. Also, if the children all nap at the same time, she can take her break while they nap and have some time for program planning. The older children in her group have naturally transitioned to one afternoon nap. Some of the younger children, those between 12 and 18 months, are still taking two naps.

At ten thirty in the morning Ms. Colette notices Lev, 14 months, lying down on the mattress in the cozy area playing with a plush toy cat. She hopes he won’t fall asleep. While Ms. Colette changes Reece’s diaper, she notices Lev starting to drift off to sleep. In a pleasant voice she calls to Lev, “Lev, wake up. It’s not nap time.” Lev opens his eyes. Catching his eye, Ms. Colette continues, “Hi, there. I’ll be right there as soon as I care for Reece.”

After washing her hands, Ms. Colette picks up Lev who is still drowsy. “Let’s play with the musical instruments until lunch is ready,” she says while carrying him to the bin of instruments. Other children, seeing her with the instruments, join in making music. However, Lev rubs his eyes and bats away the instrument Ms. Colette tries to hand him. Even with all of the music happening around him, Lev starts to nod off to sleep.

Ms. Colette sets Lev in her lap and chants a rhyme along with the children’s music thinking that may awaken Lev. He arouses briefly, but cuddles into her arms. Ms. Colette finally decides to lay him in his crib for a nap. She knows he’ll sleep through lunch, which she will set aside for him, and that he will not be tired when most of the other children nap.
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Young children rapidly develop physically, emotionally and socially. They need to re-charge their bodies and minds to grow, explore, make discoveries, tackle new challenges and be ready for interactions with peers and adults. Naps provide a critical time for them to do just that. Each infant and toddler is a unique individual with his own needs for rest, including how long and when. This includes times for rest in child care programs. While older mobile infants may naturally nap at the same time, nap times should be based on each child’s needs and not on the clock. Encouraging group nap time based on the time of day is not in the best interest of the child. Remember, it is important to partner with families around any nap time issues.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
■ = Environment & Materials  ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- How can I meet the napping needs of individual children?
- What should be considered when planning teacher break times and program planning time?

Give It a Try
- Understand that mobile infants and toddlers differ from one another in the amount of sleep they need and when they need it.
- Accommodate personal schedules by helping Lev transition to nap as soon as he shows signs of tiredness.
- Respect the schedules families have for their child and frequently communicate with them about routine care practices and schedules.
- Acknowledge that program planning is an important part of a care teacher’s responsibilities. There should be a scheduled time for planning separate from the teacher’s scheduled break.
- Consider the needs of each teacher, and the teacher’s primary care group’s needs. When possible, the primary care teacher should be available to conduct a majority of the child’s routine care.
- Schedule a consistent staff member to replace the primary care teacher during breaks and program planning. Children benefit greatly from receiving respectful care from a consistent, limited number of care teachers.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- What should I do when a child’s schedule is different from the schedule of most of the children in the group?

Give It a Try
- Allow children to follow their own individual schedules. Organize care to accommodate the children’s individual schedules.
- Practice responsive, respectful and reciprocal care teaching. Avoid attempting to continually engage Lev in play when he shows signs of disinterest or sleepiness.
- Consider a child’s individual needs, temperament, personal schedule, likes and dislikes and how you can provide responsive care to the child.
- Read children’s cues and listen to what their behavior is saying to you.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
- How do individualized routines benefit young children?

Give It a Try
- Recognize that routine care is a young child’s curriculum. It has an impact on a child’s learning, skill development and attachment to care teachers.
- Use caregiving routines to get to know the child as an individual. This approach to care provides children with a sense of security, which is the foundation for learning and emotional well-being.
- Provide individualized care to show the child he is an important person with individual needs who deserves to be cared for as an individual.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Colette cares for a group of children that range in age from 12 to 24 months. She has noticed that the older children have naturally transitioned to approximately the same mealtime and nap schedule. Some of the younger children, those between 12 and 18 months, have varied mealtime and nap schedules based on their needs. Of course, there are days when a child’s individual schedule, including that of an older child, may change. He might be hungry or sleepy earlier or later than usual and Ms. Colette makes sure to adapt to the change. She has also built a relationship with each family and encourages them to communicate with her concerning any issues relating to their child. For instance, she likes to know if a child had difficulty sleeping during the night or didn’t eat as much for breakfast as usual so she can anticipate what the child may need that particular day.

At ten thirty in the morning Ms. Colette notices Levy, 14 months, lying down on the mattress in the cozy area playing with a plush toy cat. He usually starts getting sleepy around this time. Levy is showing cues of being ready for nap. He typically sits up when playing and lies down to play when he is getting tired. He is also rubbing his eyes. Sitting down next to Levy, Ms. Colette rubs his back saying pleasantly, “I see you are playing with the white cat. Is it saying, “Meow, meow?” Levy smiles. She continues, “It looks like you are getting sleepy. I saw you give a yawn. Let’s get ready for nap.”

Ms. Colette extends her hands as a gesture to pick him up and Levy reaches for her. Levy likes to be held and favors having Ms. Colette sway while standing as opposed to being rocked. After a few sways, Levy becomes very relaxed. Ms. Colette knows this is a sign to transition him to his crib. She gently removes the plush toy cat from his grasp, places it on a nearby shelf, and lays Levy on his back in his crib. She strokes his head, which Levy likes, and he drifts to sleep.

Levy sleeps through lunch while Ms. Colette shares mealtime with the other children in her primary care group. Ms. Renee comes into the room at twelve thirty. She cares for Ms. Colette’s primary group every day when Ms. Colette takes her break at twelve forty-five. Ms. Renee is routinely there to greet Levy when he awakes. She prepares his lunch and takes care of him until Ms. Colette returns. Ms. Renee also fills in for Ms. Colette during her weekly program planning time.
Create Your Own Vignette

Do you have a real-life situation that you would like to address? The “Create Your Own Vignette” Template provides you with the opportunity by taking you through the “Watch,” “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” and “Putting It All Together” process. You can create questions, strategies and possible resolutions by using the blank vignette template found in the Field Guide Introduction Section.

Toddler
16 to 36 Months

These vignettes capture a moment in time in child care programs based on real-life challenges. The vignettes enable you to “see” and “hear” children and care teachers during play, learning, and caregiving routines and the interactions involved. After reading a vignette, the reader walks through a series of questions and possible teaching strategy solutions. These strategies are then woven into a final “Putting It All Together” vignette depicting a more developmentally appropriate child-teacher encounter.

Visit www.scpitc.org to download any and all sections of the Infant & Toddler Field Guide.
In each vignette you can “see” and “hear” toddlers and their care teachers in action. Choose a vignette topic and turn to the page in the Toddler section that you want to explore.

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Note: The vignette titles capture what care teachers commonly “say” or “ask” about specific topics. It is important to note that the titles may not be stating what teachers should do. You will need to read the vignette, questions and essential practices to understand how the title plays out in the vignette and what appropriate professional practices are implemented.

Want to Explore the Infant and Mobile Infant Vignettes?

Download these age sections at www scpitc org.

Age Group: Infant: Birth to 8 Months

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(Continued on next page)
Some Vignette Topics Are Not Available for Certain Age Groups

While a majority of topics are presented in each of the three age groups, there are a few topics that are not. Some topics are not suitable for the age group represented, due either to the developmental stages of children or the appropriateness of the experience. For example, there are no vignettes on “Getting Them Ready for Preschool” for the infant and mobile infant age groups since directed school readiness activities are inappropriate for this age group.

Use of Screen Time (TV/DVD/Video/Computer)

Hands-on opportunities in appropriate environments require children to use their sense of smell, touch, sight, hearing, and sometimes taste. These opportunities also involve the use of motor, cognitive, and emotional skills and often language and social skills, which are not utilized in passive screen time activities.

For this reason and following the national recommendations and the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the use of TVs/DVDs/videos/computers is not appropriate for children under the age of 24 months in any circumstance. It is best practice, and the Field Guide’s recommendation, not to use any screen time experiences with children under the age of 36 months.
Each vignette is laid out similarly. Understanding each section will help you get the most out of the Field Guide.

What You’ll Find on Page 1 of Each Vignette

- **Watch**
  “Watch,” the initial vignette, sets up an example of a real-life situation that a care teacher may experience. The care teacher’s professional practices illustrated in the “Watch” vignette are not “wrong” but rather are practices that could be strengthened.

- **Child’s Quote**
  The child’s quote on the “Watch” page is “Out of the Mouth of Babes.” The child is telling the reader what her needs are based on the ideas portrayed in the vignette. The development team titled this piece “One Thing Right Now”; the one thing we would like the reader to consider right now.

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**So Aggressive... With Others**

**Watch**

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg.

Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole's baby doll. Then she reaches to take the bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ‘Nita, my bottle,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita before pedaling off again. Ms. Alix repeats herself, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at her, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

When she catches up with Keeton, Ms. Alix kneels in front of the trike and stops him. She takes his hand, gently pulls him off of the trike, and walks him to the cozy area. “I told you to go to the cozy area. Sit here until you can listen to my words,” she sits him down and hands him a book. Keeton throws the book on the floor and kicks it with his foot. Ms. Alix takes him by the hand and says, “Keeton, you are hurting your friends and destroying the books. You’ll have to stay with me until you can listen to my words and do what you are supposed to do.” For the rest of play time, Ms. Alix holds Keeton's hand and takes him with her as she goes about her duties.

“Help me understand boundaries so I can keep having fun with other children.”
Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole’s baby doll. Then she reaches to take the baby doll away from him. He protests, “Oh, no, ¡No, my bottle!,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita, who take a few steps back. Ms. Alix says, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at her, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

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Impulse control is an essential part of a child’s developing emotion regulation and self-regulation. It starts developing in infancy and continues throughout the preschool years. A child in the process of learning impulse control can be challenging for an adult. A young toddler may only occasionally comply with a teacher’s expectations. An older toddler is likely to express understanding of some boundaries, but may not yet have developed enough self-control to attend to them consistently. Being patient with the learning process is key. With appropriate supervision, guidance, and support from responsive care teachers, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.
South Carolina's Infant & Toddler Field Guide

Details of Vignette Layout

What You'll Find on Page 3 of Each Vignette

Give It a Try Key:
The bullet point icons identify the “Give It a Try” professional practices that refer to teacher interaction (▲), environment & materials (●), child development & interest (★) and caregiving routine (◆).

Ask Yourself

The “Ask Yourself” questions, written in the reader’s voice, align to specific paragraphs in the “Watch” vignette. This enables you to consider questions that directly relate to child behaviors and professional practices. This approach of reviewing a scenario and asking questions is part of the reflective process.

Give It a Try

“Give It a Try” presents possibilities to strengthen your professional practices, increase your knowledge and to reflect on your ideas and beliefs. Be open to trying new ideas and seeing what works and what doesn’t. The suggested professional practices are options and do not represent a complete list. They do, however, illustrate essential professional practices that support the provision of relationship-based care that is responsive, respectful and reciprocal.

The “Ask Yourself/Give It a Try” strategy is based on The Program for Infant/Toddler Care’s Watch, Ask, and Adapt; a process that utilizes the skills of observation, reflection and application to support care teaching.
The Guidelines’ Icons in the Vignette Highlight:

- How children’s experiences directly relate to their development.
- How experiences can be intentional and unintentional and still affect development.
- How teachers should take advantage of opportunities and everyday encounters to support children’s development; it isn’t something extra teachers must do.
- How different developmental domains do not operate separately, but instead are inextricably woven together and are part of every care teaching decision you make.

Putting It All Together

The “Putting It All Together” vignette is an expansion of the original “Watch” vignette and shows how the scenario might be different when the practices recommended in the “Ask Yourself” and “Give It a Try” are carried out. Of course, there is not one solution and there are many factors to take into consideration. What we do know is that knowledgeable, responsive, respectful and reciprocal care leads to meaningful, early experiences that last a lifetime.

Infant & Toddler Guidelines Connections

*South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide* provide definitions and examples of infant and toddler development in six developmental domains from birth to 36 months. Each of the six developmental domains is represented with an icon that relates to the type of development described in the domain.

The Guidelines’ icons, in the “Putting It All Together” section, connect a child’s behavior/interaction with some of the six developmental domains and the Guidelines’ indicator it represents. Though only one to three of the Guidelines’ icons are aligned with a behavior in the “Putting It All Together” vignette, more developmental behaviors and connections can be identified throughout.
Crying...Upon Arrival

Sergio, 23 months, and his older sister arrive at their child care program with their grandma. As they approach Sergio’s classroom, Sergio grabs his grandma’s legs and starts to cry. She opens the classroom door and nudges Sergio and his sister into the room.

Ms. Loretta, Sergio’s primary care teacher, hears the commotion at the door and looks up from where she is seated on the floor reading books to the toddlers. She cheerfully calls to Sergio and says, “Come on over Sergio, we are reading about bugs and you like bugs.” Sergio cries louder and clings to his grandma.

Ms. Loretta walks over to Sergio, greets his grandma and sister, and kneels down to get Sergio’s attention. She says in a calm voice, “It is hard to say good-bye to grandma but it is time. She has to take your sister to her classroom. Come with me to the cozy corner and I will read you a book.” Sergio shakes his head ‘no’ and continues to cry. Ms. Loretta says, “I’ll help you say good-bye to your grandma.” She takes his hand and walks his grandma and sister to the door. As his sister and grandma leave, grandma says, “I’ll be back after nap time.” Sergio collapses on the floor, continues to cry and scream, and begins to kick his feet.

Wanting him to stop screaming and kicking his feet, Ms. Loretta attempts to pick him up, but this makes Sergio scream louder. Ms. Loretta calmly says, “You’re OK. You don’t need to cry, she will be back.” She lets Sergio remain on the floor, staying nearby to make sure he is safe.

I need everyone who cares for me to make a plan and work together to make saying goodbye easier.
Sergio, 23 months, and his older sister arrive at their child care program with their grandma. As they approach Sergio’s classroom, Sergio grabs his grandma’s legs and starts to cry. She opens the classroom door and nudges Sergio and his sister into the room.

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Sometimes arrival routines are anything but routine. Toddlers may arrive at the child care setting ready to conquer the world one day and the next day they desire and need the reassurance of their parent, family member or other adult who is their primary caregiver, before taking on the world. A toddler’s understanding of separation is more developed than that of a mobile or young infant, and the child’s temperament, culture, and family relationships play an important role in the separation process. A toddler who is upset needs time to feel what he is feeling, and needs your support in the process.

Your role is to understand and express concern, be empathetic, patient and flexible.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why does Sergio cling to his grandma when he arrives, even though he eventually calms down and is usually content and happy throughout the day?
• What should I do when Sergio and his family first arrive?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that Sergio may be going through a developmental stage where separation is difficult. Also consider that there may be changes in his morning routine before he arrives.
★ Clinging to his grandma and crying doesn’t necessarily mean that he dislikes his care teacher or the program. Respect his way of expressing his feelings about separating from his family.
◆ Warmly greet grandma, Sergio and his sister at the door upon arrival. Warm greetings welcome the family and are the first step in the separation routine.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What can I do to help Sergio separate from his family?
• How can I help Sergio manage his emotions?

Give It a Try
◆ Help families establish consistent and predictable separation and reunion routines. Suggest that they use the same routines daily. Encourage Sergio’s grandma to say good-bye to Sergio before leaving. Encourage Sergio to say good-bye, too.
◆ Invite the family to stay while the child adjusts. They may not know they are welcomed and encouraged to stay to help the child get ready for the separation.
◆ Create a welcoming, comfortable space for arriving families.
★ Offer Sergio a way to comfort himself, such as a favorite security item, a family photo, and cuddling in your arms, as the transition unfolds.
▲ Act as a secure base for Sergio during transitions by staying close to him, reading his cues, and by responding promptly and sensitively to his discomfort.
▲ Be sure to respond empathetically to children in distress. Acknowledge and validate Sergio’s feelings. Offer comforting words.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Sergio, 23 months, and his older sister arrive at their child care program with their grandma. Knowing Sergio needs time to adjust when he arrives at his classroom, grandma takes his older sister to her room first. As they approach Sergio’s classroom, Sergio grabs his grandma’s legs and starts crying. She opens the classroom door and nudges Sergio into the room.

Ms. Loretta, Sergio’s primary care teacher, knows that Sergio is having trouble separating from his grandma in the morning. She has made several adaptations to the classroom to help Sergio with the transition. She has rearranged the room so there is a place for his grandma to be with him when they arrive. A small adult-size couch is near the door and there is also a place for grandma to put her personal belongings out of reach of the children. Sergio’s favorite book is waiting for him on the couch.

Sergio’s grandma and Ms. Loretta have been talking about ways to help Sergio have an easier time transitioning into the classroom. Grandma has agreed to spend a few minutes with Sergio before she leaves. They have also agreed that when grandma is ready to go she will tell Ms. Loretta so she can help Sergio through the transition.

After greeting his grandma, Ms. Loretta kneels down to a crying Sergio. She says in a calm voice, “Good morning, it is good to see you Sergio. Do you and grandma want to read your favorite book before she goes?” Grandma gets comfortable on the couch and a crying Sergio joins her. At his eye level, Ms. Loretta says, “Enjoy your book. When it is time, I will help you say good-bye to your grandma.”

While reading the book and cuddling with grandma, he calms and stops crying. Grandma signals to Ms. Loretta that she is ready to go. Ms. Loretta joins the family and asks grandma to give Sergio his blanket and favorite stuffed monkey. Grandma says, “I have to go now. Ms. Loretta will take care of you until I come back after nap time.” She kisses him on the forehead, hugs him, says good-bye and leaves. Ms. Loretta says good-bye to grandma as well.

Almost immediately, Sergio begins to cry. Ms. Loretta, sitting with him on the couch, empathizes and warmly says, “It is hard to say good-bye to grandma. Are you crying because you are sad?” Sergio, nodding his head ‘yes,’ cries harder. Ms. Loretta holds out her arms to comfort him, but he turns away holding his stuffed monkey and throws himself down on the couch cushions. Ms. Loretta gently rubs his back saying, “I will take care of you until grandma picks you up after nap.” She continues to rub his back and waits for a couple of minutes watching him. Sergio’s crying lessens and he looks in her direction. She takes his cue and asks if he would like to play with his favorite fire truck in the block area. Sniffling, he climbs off the couch and heads toward the blocks, looking back to see if Ms. Loretta is following. She picks up on his cue and joins him by helping him make a road for his fire truck.

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Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her internal states and feelings, as well as stimulation from the outside world.

Emotional Development:
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize his or her own feelings.
Crying...Throughout the Day

Since Paige, 28 months, arrived at her child care program this morning, she has been very listless and uninterested in the experiences and materials around her. Now sitting in the book area holding a puppet, she scans the room watching the other children. She selects a book, turning a couple of pages but showing no interest. She begins to whimper then to cry softly. Her care teacher, Ms. Debra, says, “What’s the matter, Paige?” Paige doesn’t respond but her crying diminishes to whimpering. Ms. Debra returns to what she was doing.

Later in the morning, Paige is wandering around the room, seemingly without purpose. Paige once again begins to weep. Ms. Debra is at the table with three children exploring shells, pinecones, rocks and leaves. She invites Paige to join them. Paige stands next to Ms. Debra then she asks to sit on Ms. Debra’s lap. Ms. Debra seats Paige on her lap and hands her a leaf. Paige begins to whimper. Ms. Debra kindly says, “Paige, you are crying a lot today. What is wrong?” She checks her forehead to see if she has a temperature and decides she doesn’t.

After lunch time, Paige starts crying again. Ms. Debra compassionately says to Paige, “Are you tired? I’m getting the cots out now.” She helps Paige get comfortable on her cot then assists other children. Paige silently weeps until she falls asleep.

While the children sleep, Ms. Debra calls Paige’s mom, Mrs. Metz, at work to see if she can offer some insight into why Paige is so weepy today. She gets a voice recording that she is traveling and can’t be reached. Ms. Debra recognizes that this could be the cause of Paige’s distress and will ask Mr. Metz when he picks up Paige tonight.
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Infants’ and toddlers’ foundation for development is the secure relationships they develop with their parent(s) and care teachers. This secure relationship is referred to as an attachment. Attachment is the process of affection, bonding and connectedness between an infant and toddler and a significant care teacher or parent that builds a sense of trust and security within the child. It profoundly affects all areas of development. Studies on attachment show that children who are in emotionally secure relationships early in life are more likely to be self-confident and socially competent. Sensitive care teachers who read the children’s cues and meet emotional and physical needs help each child become securely attached to them – which benefits the child in so many ways!
**Take Another Look**

**Ask Yourself**
- What could be bothering Paige?
- What can I do to comfort Paige?

**Give It a Try**
- Conduct a brief health assessment to determine if Paige has any symptoms of illness or injury.
- Review Paige’s daily sheet for information her family may have provided that might be helpful in figuring out why Paige is listless and weepy.
- Check with Paige to find out if she is hungry, thirsty, or sleepy. Offer her water, a snack, and/or a quiet place to rest.
- Serve as a secure base for Paige when she is upset and crying. Stay nearby, talk to her, and hold her if she wants.
- Offer Paige her security objects to help her cope with her distress.
- Help Paige to be comfortable in her surroundings. Invite her to engage in activities or help her settle into the cozy area for quiet time; respect her choices.

**Keep Watching**

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I help Paige transition to nap?

**Give It a Try**
- Consider a child’s typical nap schedule, but also consider the child’s experiences that day. Paige may not be sleepy but may want to rest or spend time with her care teacher.
- Offer comfort and help children relax by sitting with them, rubbing their back, or stroking their hair.

**Watch Some More**

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I work with families to ensure I have the information I need to take care of their child?
- What can I do for Paige in this situation?

**Give It a Try**
- Talk with families about the importance of sharing information about a child’s life at home and current needs and how such information helps you care for their child.
- Build trusting relationships with families so information sharing may be more comfortable.
- Set up ways to communicate regularly with families, including daily sheets that ask about changes to home routines, etc.
- Conduct predictable daily routines for Paige.
- Ask Paige’s parents if they have suggestions on what may help Paige.
- Be patient and understanding. Toddler separation from persons they are attached to is emotionally difficult.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Debra sees Mr. Metz and Paige, 28 months, arrive at the child care program. Typically Mrs. Metz brings Paige to the program, so Ms. Debra takes note of the change in routine. Ms. Debra notices that Paige is weeping. After seeing Paige's expression, she greets the family a little more quietly than normal. “Good morning Paige, I am happy to see you. Hi Mr. Metz, this is a nice surprise. Usually I greet Mrs. Metz in the morning.” Mr. Metz replies, “Paige's mom is traveling out of town this week for work and Paige is really missing her.” Ms. Debra comments, “Oh Paige, you must really miss your mom.”

Turning to Mr. Metz, Ms. Debra asks, “Is there anything special you would like me to do to help Paige, or is there anything else I should be aware of?” Mr. Metz says, “Paige brought a new plush bunny her mom gave her before she left and Paige is quite attached to it.” Ms. Debra says to Paige, “That is a lovely bunny your mom gave you. Does your bunny want to come and play too?” Ms. Debra holds out her hand. Paige, holding on to her bunny tightly, takes Ms. Debra's hand and says good-bye to her dad. She begins to cry softly. Ms. Debra kneels down and offers Paige comfort.

Once Paige is a little calmer, Ms. Debra asks Paige, “What would you like to do?” Paige scans the room and walks toward the book area. Ms. Debra joins Paige to help her transition into play. Paige looks absently at the books, seeming uninterested. Ms. Debra quietly pulls out three books about families, one of them focusing on mothers and lays them near the other books. Paige chooses the book on mothers and says to Ms. Debra, “You read mommy book.” Ms. Debra settles next to Paige and they look at the book.

Ms. Debra says to Paige, “I am going to get out the nature box. We all enjoyed that yesterday. Do you want to come to the table to look at the leaves, rocks and pinecones?” Paige shakes her head “no.” Ms. Debra replies, “What are you going to do?” Paige replies, “Read books.”

Ms. Debra and three other children are exploring the nature box. Paige, still holding her bunny, soon joins them and asks to sit on Ms. Debra's lap. She is softly weeping. Sitting Paige on her lap, Ms. Debra gently rubs her back and says, “You miss your mom and are sad. Do you want to lie on your cot or do you want to sit with me?” Paige replies, “With you.” Ms. Debra moves the nature items closer to Paige in case she decides to join in.

Since Paige is still crying, Ms. Debra decides to do a health assessment to make sure Paige is not showing symptoms of illness or injury. There don’t seem to be any health issues.

After lunch time, Paige starts crying again. Ms. Debra says, “Let’s get mommy’s picture so you can hold her close. I’ll get your cot out if you want to rest.” Ms. Debra gets the picture and helps Paige settle on her cot. She tells Paige, “I’m going to help your friends get ready for nap and I’ll be back to sit with you.” Soon Ms. Debra returns and rubs Paige’s back and sings her a song. Paige briefly weeps but soon relaxes with Ms. Debra’s help and drifts off to sleep.
Xavier, 19 months, is playing in the sandbox at the home of his family child care teacher Ms. Sadie. Victoria, 23 months, approaches Xavier and bumps him off the edge of the sandbox, plopping him into the sand. Xavier screams in protest and then cries as Victoria takes the bucket and shovel he was playing with and starts digging in the sand.

Ms. Sadie, who is helping A.J., 3½ years, climb up the climber, did not see what occurred in the sandbox. Hearing Xavier’s scream, she comes over saying, “What happened?” Xavier, leaning over and too upset to respond, goes from screaming to crying. Ms. Sadie, looking back and forth between Xavier and Victoria and seeing nothing wrong, says, “I don’t know why you are crying. Here, play with this truck in the sand.” Ms. Sadie returns to A.J. Xavier continues to cry as he looks at Victoria playing with his bucket and shovel.

“ If I am upset, it is for a reason. I need your comfort even if you don’t know why I’m crying. ”

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide • www.scpitc.org
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Crying and screaming as well as giggling and clapping with excitement are all ways children express their emotions. As children develop emotionally and socially, gain language and communication skills, and have regular positive interactions with responsive adults, they learn to express their emotions with gestures and words.

It is important to remember that children’s communications reflect their feelings. For instance, they may be feeling physically uncomfortable, very tired, or they may be sad because their dad has left. Or they may be reacting to something that happened to them. An interaction with another child or even the re-arrangement of a room may make them feel unsettled. There is always a reason a child is expressing an emotion; it is up to care teachers to provide security and comfort and try to understand and be responsive to the children’s feelings.
Give It a Try Key

▲ = Teacher Interaction
★ = Child Development & Interest
♦ = Environment & Materials
◆ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why are Xavier’s reactions so intense?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that children’s behavior is a reflection of their feelings.
★ Recognize that a physical exchange between peers doesn’t have to physically hurt for a child to be upset. Take time to understand a child’s feelings.
★ Consider how Xavier’s temperament might be contributing to his responses. Children are born with specific temperaments that affect how they respond and react to situations, people and the environment.
★ Learn about temperaments, their characteristics, and effective care teaching strategies that work with different temperaments.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How should I handle a situation I didn’t see happen?
• What can I do to resolve the situation?

Give It a Try
▷ Prevent such situations by positioning yourself so you can see all the children. Arrange materials and equipment for easier supervision.
▲ Go immediately to Xavier and comfort him. Do a quick assessment to determine if he is hurt or injured. Try to figure out what happened after you comfort Xavier.
▲ Help Xavier recover from intense emotions by staying nearby, physically comforting him if he allows, until the emotions are less intense.
▲ Provide word labels for Xavier’s emotions so he knows you understand how he is feeling. For example, “You sound like you are angry.”
▲ Explore what happened with Xavier and Victoria, after Xavier calms down, by asking simple questions. For children who haven’t developed the verbal skills to express themselves, ask them to show you and point to what happened.
▲ Encourage children to solve problems by themselves. If they need additional support, suggest potential solutions and give guidance as the children try them out.
▷ Help prevent future problems by placing duplicates of popular toys and materials in the environment. For example, both Xavier and Victoria can have a bucket and a shovel if duplicates are placed in the sandbox.

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Xavier, 19 months, is playing in the sandbox at the home of his family child care teacher Ms. Sadie. Victoria, 23 months, approaches Xavier and bumps him off the edge of the sandbox, plopping him into the sand. Xavier screams in protest and then cries as Victoria takes the yellow bucket and shovel he was playing with and starts digging in the sand.

With the environment set up for easy supervision, Ms. Sadie, who is helping A.J., 3½ years, climb up the climber, calls to Xavier, “Xavier, I’ll be right there.” Once A.J. is secure on the climber, Ms. Sadie kneels next to Xavier and rubs his back. Still keeping A.J. in sight she says, “I saw Victoria bump you and take your shovel and bucket. You are very upset.” Xavier nods “yes” still crying. Ms. Sadie gives Xavier a moment to calm himself while she continues to rub his back.

Ms. Sadie, still kneeling beside Xavier, says to Victoria, “Victoria, Xavier is upset; you bumped him and took his bucket and shovel. When he is using them, I want you to find something else to use.” Pointing to the green bucket and shovel and a purple set nearby Ms. Sadie explains, “There are other sets for you to use.” Ms. Sadie decides that making Victoria give the yellow bucket and shovel back to Xavier will probably cause Victoria to react strongly and will worsen the situation. Also, knowing toddlers are not developmentally ready to share materials, she decides that the best strategy is to ask Xavier if he would like to choose another bucket and shovel. She makes a mental note to pay extra attention to Victoria’s participation in peer play, so she can help Victoria have more positive interactions.

Turning to Xavier she asks, “Xavier, do you want to use the green bucket and shovel or the purple?” Xavier says, “Mine,” and reaches for the green set. Stepping back, Ms. Sadie watches to see how the children react and continue their play. She returns to A.J. keeping an eye on Xavier and Victoria’s play. After a couple of minutes, Ms. Sadie notices Victoria reaching for Xavier’s shovel. Ms. Sadie calmly calls to Victoria, “Victoria, that is Xavier’s shovel, you can use the purple one.” Victoria, looking around the sandbox and, though not knowing the color purple, picks up the remaining shovel and looks at Ms. Sadie. Ms. Sadie replies, “Yes, that is the purple one.”
Mr. Mateo and Ms. Christina are outside on the playground with eight toddlers. It is a warm and sunny spring day so the children and teachers are thrilled to be outside in the nice weather. The teachers decide to stay outside longer than usual because the children are enjoying the outdoor time so much. This will mean combining the children into one large group for the transition to lunch and skipping story time, but the teachers decide staying outside in the beautiful weather is worth it.

When the time comes to go inside, the teachers need to rush things a bit to make up for the longer outdoor time. Mr. Mateo and Ms. Christina gather the children and head inside to toilet, wash hands and eat lunch. Several of the children don’t want to go; they are really enjoying being outside. Jacinda, 30 months, and Martha, 33 months, start crying as the children are led by the teachers into the classroom.

Ms. Christina has the toddlers wait near the bathroom door and does her best to help the toddlers toilet and wash their hands before sending them to the lunch tables. Mr. Mateo washes his hands and starts preparing for lunch. The toileting and hand washing routines are taking much longer than usual because all the toddlers are going through the routine in one large group as opposed to the two smaller groups they usually work in. The children are having a really hard time waiting by the bathroom. By the time the children get through toileting and hand washing, several more children are crying. Ms. Christina helps the crying children find seats at the tables and then leaves Mr. Mateo to serve the children lunch while she sets up the cots for nap.

Before lunch is over, two children are falling asleep their food untouched. Jacinda and Martha are still crying, and Thomas, 27 months, who is very tired, has started sucking his thumb and whimpering. Ms. Christina helps the children clean up after lunch and go to their cots. Because things were rushed, she didn’t have time to put out the children’s blankets and security items or the books the children like to look at as they are settling in for nap. She rushes to find these items for the children while Mr. Mateo cleans up the lunch tables.

When all the children are finally quiet and going to sleep, the two exhausted teachers decide to never again stay outside longer than usual.

“**It’s OK to change our schedule once in awhile, but I like my routine care to stay the same and be predictable.**

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Young children need a schedule that is predictable, but flexible enough for teachers to meet the children’s individual needs and to take advantage of learning experiences as they happen. A predictable schedule enables children to feel a sense of order, which helps them feel secure. When creating a daily schedule, plan adequate time for routine care (meals, naps, arrivals/departures, toileting, dressing). Routines for infants and toddlers are a main element of their curriculum, so attention to individual needs and ample time to meet those needs are essential. Other components of an appropriate schedule include unhurried time for learning/play experiences, time for transitions, balance of active and quiet times and opportunities for outdoor play twice a day.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can we take advantage of the nice weather without disrupting the children’s routines?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that toddlers rely on routines and the timing of routines, especially those that involve meals, nap and toileting, to have their needs met.
★ Recognize that dependable routines and transitions help children regulate their behavior.
◆ Avoid any changes to the schedule that impact routine care. You can be more flexible with the schedule during blocks of times for play and learning experiences.
◆ Give children information in advance when schedules change. Tell them what will happen and how it will be different.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What do I need to do to help children manage the impact of the schedule change, even when play and learning time are affected?

Give It a Try
◆ Maintain the typical sequence of transitions and routines. Conduct transitions and routines the same way each time.
★ Plan, prepare and expect toddlers to react to any schedule changes, even changes in environment and play time.
★ Understand that children take their emotional cues from care teachers or other children in circumstances that are unusual or uncertain to them.
▲ Stay calm and reassuring. Your pleasant and calm voice tone and non-verbal cues, such as slow, calm movements and smiles, will communicate reassurance to children. This will help them align their responses to yours.
◆ Save housekeeping tasks, such as lunch time cleanup, until after you help the children find their security items and get settled on their cots. Stay engaged with the children as they transition to their cots.
★ Consider a toddler’s ability to wait and set appropriate expectations.
Mr. Mateo and Ms. Christina are care teachers for eight toddlers. Soon it will be time for outdoor play. Noticing the warm and sunny spring day, Mr. Mateo and Ms. Christina discuss adjusting the schedule to allow the toddlers more outside play time before lunch. However, knowing that the children rely on eating at the same time and that most have nap times that meet their needs, the teachers decide to follow the planned morning schedule. They choose instead to add extra time to the afternoon outdoor schedule since it occurs during free play and not routine care. Mr. Mateo makes a note to take additional items outdoors for afternoon play so the toddlers will still have a variety of materials to choose from for their extended play and learning time.

During lunchtime conversation, the teachers tell the children that after snack they will go outside to enjoy the warm spring weather. Once the toddlers have had lunch and nap, the teachers remind the group that after snack they will go out to play. The teachers decided to add extra outdoor time to the beginning of the afternoon schedule instead of the end, which can conflict with departure routines.

When snack is over, Jacinda, 30 months, and Martha, 33 months, hurry to the door remembering that going outside is next. They are excited about going outside early. Thomas, 27 months, is slower to adapt to changes in the schedule. He is hesitant to leave what he is playing with. A couple of other toddlers are still involved in play and not eager to go outside right away. Ms. Christina takes the children who are ready to go outside, and Mr. Mateo helps the other children get ready to transition to outside play. The teachers are conscientious to maintain ratio within this grouping.

Mr. Mateo alerts Thomas, “We are going outside in 3 minutes.” Thomas replies hesitantly, “Can I take Bear (his plush animal)?” Mr. Mateo replies, “Yes, Bear can go outside with you.” Thomas asks, “Take puzzle?” Mr. Mateo answers, “Puzzle pieces may get lost outside. Puzzles need to stay indoors.” Thomas hangs his head.

Mr. Mateo then asks Thomas, “Would you like to help me carry the basket of toys outside?” Thomas looks up with a smile and runs to the basket. The toddlers play outside an extra 20 minutes. Then Ms. Christina and Mr. Mateo transition the children to indoor play in the typical manner.

Cognitive Development:
The child will remember people, objects and events.

Emotional Development:
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will comprehend the message of another's communication.
Mr. Reuben is on the playground with his toddler group, enjoying a spectacular sunny and warm day. Olivia, 28 months, and Nicholas, 24 months, are playing on the climber. After several trips down the slide and exploring the climber, they start running and chasing each other. Olivia and Nicholas run to the fence looking and talking about what they see on the other side. Olivia grabs a handful of mulch and throws it over the fence. Nicholas imitates her and they are giggling and having a good time.

Mr. Reuben notices the children throwing mulch and goes over to them saying, “Stop throwing mulch, please. Come away from the fence,” and ushers the children back to the climber. Olivia, having no interest in the climber, darts to the fence on other side of the playground. Nicholas joins her. Nicholas picks up mulch and throws it once again over the fence. Olivia joins in.

Mr. Reuben, frustrated they are at it again, walks the children to a patch of grass, asks them to sit down and play with the trucks he has brought outside. Mr. Reuben walks to the climber to supervise the other toddlers. Olivia, uninterested in the trucks, follows Mr. Reuben.

“Sometimes you help me find acceptable choices that interest me.”
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Children’s behavior often reveals their feelings. Some behaviors, such as hitting, are more noticeable, and a care teacher may conclude the child is angry or frustrated. Other behaviors may give a more subtle message. A child throwing mulch over a fence may be saying, “I am bored, and this is keeping me entertained,” “I can do something fun” or “I want my teacher’s attention.” It is the teacher’s job to “read” the message and intentionally provide guidance, and learning and play choices that address what the child is telling you.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why does Nicholas copy Olivia’s mulch throwing?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that Nicholas’s imitation of Olivia indicates an interest in playing with her.
★ Acknowledge that imitation is part of a child’s cognitive development and how he processes and understands information.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why didn’t Olivia have interest in playing on the climber again?
• Why did Olivia and Nicholas go right back to throwing the mulch, even after I told them to stop?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that toddlers like new, interesting experiences. Olivia’s earlier play with the climber may have satisfied her interest in that activity for the time being.
★ Acknowledge that toddlers will create their own “fun” and experiences if the surrounding environment, materials and people do not provide interesting and challenging choices to explore.
★ Recognize that toddlers test boundaries and are still learning adult rules, expectations and the possible consequences of inappropriate and unsafe behavior.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• How can I get the children to play with the materials I’ve provided?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that toddlers may stay engaged longer with an experience if they choose it.
★ Recognize that toddlers may easily get bored with experiences and materials lacking novelty and age and developmentally appropriate challenge. Materials should vary in challenge so children can practice current and emerging skills.
★ Encourage children’s interest while redirecting the part of the activity that is inappropriate. For example, help Nicholas and Olivia use the trucks to move and dump the mulch.
★ Provide many safe, appropriate opportunities for large muscle play and materials for outdoor exploration.
★ Supply additional materials children can use for complex play. For example, add a variety of vehicles that have different functions (front loaders, cranes, dump trucks).
★ Join in children’s play; talk about their ideas and ask questions. Children will learn how to play with peers by playing with you.
★ Make eye contact, use non-verbal facial expressions and gestures, such as smiling, pointing, and nodding your head, to communicate what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and to show your interest in their play.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Mr. Reuben is on the playground with his toddler group, enjoying a spectacular sunny and warm day. Mr. Reuben brought out a variety of construction vehicles, play hard hats, shovels and pails. He also brought out balls and buckets so children can throw the balls into buckets. In addition, he put out shoe-boxes, plastic containers with lids, and magnifying glasses the children can use for exploration. He knows his toddlers are always on the go and always searching for something interesting and new to do.

Olivia, 28 months, and Nicholas, 24 months, are playing on the climber. After several trips down the slide and exploring the climber, they start running and chasing each other. Olivia and Nicholas run to the fence looking and talking about what they see on the other side. Olivia grabs a handful of mulch and throws it over the fence. Nicholas imitates her, and they are giggling and having a good time.

Mr. Reuben, noticing the children throwing mulch, goes over and kneels next to them, still being able to see the other children on the playground, and says, “Stop throwing mulch please.” He had seen the children looking through the fence before the mulch throwing began so he says, “What do you see over there?” referring to the other side of the fence. Olivia remarks, “A bird was hopping.” “It was hopping? Maybe it was looking for a worm. Nicholas, did you see the bird?” asks Mr. Reuben. Nicholas answers, “It flew away.” Mr. Reuben comments, “Wonder where it went?” Olivia replies, “It went home to its Mommy.” Mr. Reuben asks Nicholas, “Where do you think the bird went?” Nicholas replies, “Home to Daddy.”

Wanting to direct the children away from possibly throwing mulch again, Mr. Reuben asks, “Do you want to stay and look for more birds or do you want to discover something else to do?” Olivia says, “Something else.” Mr. Reuben shows her and Nicholas the items he brought outside. Nicholas grabs a truck, bulldozer and a hard hat and runs to the climber. Mr. Reuben says to Nicholas, “You can use your construction equipment with the mulch but let’s find a safe place away from the climber to play.” He helps Nicholas move his items to a space clear of traffic. He reminds Nicholas, “Remember, no throwing mulch.” He smiles at Nicholas and looks around to see what Olivia has chosen. She was looking through a magnifying glass. Mr. Reuben helps her look at mulch, grass and leaves, some of which Olivia collected in a shoe box. Other toddlers are interested in the new items too.

Mr. Reuben supervises the toddlers, being sure to make eye contact, smile and interact with them during their play.
Padma and Hoshi, 25 months old, are toddlers in Ms. Bernice’s family child care program. They have been together in child care since they were infants and have spent a great deal of time in each other’s company. They like to do the same thing at the same time. Ms. Bernice lets them select and pursue their own activity choices but they often have trouble finding something to do and staying on task.

Padma starts the day in the art area where watercolors are available; Hoshi, who was roaming around the room, soon joins her. Ms. Bernice helps them get on their smocks and prepares the materials. After a few strokes, Padma says, “I done,” takes her smock off, and leaving her art supplies, heads to the block and vehicle area where she proceeds to pull all of the blocks off of the shelf. Hearing the commotion, Hoshi decides to check it out, dropping his art supplies too.

Hoshi watches Padma stack a few blocks before joining her in play. Hoshi pushes a truck around “delivering” blocks. Padma chooses a truck, pushes it into the stack of blocks knocking it down and continues to “drive” it out of the block area, over to the science shelf. Driving it along the top of the shelf, she knocks everything off. In the meantime, Ms. Bernice, who is warming a bottle for Lee, 4 months, sees Padma’s path of clutter.
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Simple sentences spoken to toddlers can hold a wealth of knowledge. Take a look at this sentence: “Padma, you used your brush to paint long yellow stripes.” It has a pronoun, “you”; an action-verb, “used”; a possessive, “your brush”; a preposition, “to paint”; adjectives, “long” and “yellow,” and a descriptive noun, “stripes.” A sentence such as “you…paint…stripes” gives children rich experiences with language. It helps them expand their vocabulary and learn language that will build a foundation for school success. Make the most of every simple sentence you and a child share.
**Give It a Try Key**

- ▲ Teacher Interaction
- ★ Child Development & Interest
- ● Environment & Materials
- ♦ Caregiving Routine

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**Take Another Look**

Ask Yourself

- Why do some toddlers keep changing the focus of their play?
- Why is the development of early friendships beneficial?

**Give It a Try**

★ Recognize that toddlers may have short attention spans and gradually develop the ability to attend to experiences for increasingly longer periods of time.

★ Consider that toddlers may stay engaged with an experience a little longer if they choose what to do.

★ Appreciate that toddlers develop at their own pace; some may attend to an activity for less time than others.

★ Realize that making friends is one of the major tasks of childhood and helps build the foundation for success in having friendships later in life.

★ Consider the importance of peer relationships. They influence how children view themselves and their place in the social world.

★ Realize peer relationships contribute to a child’s sense of self-competence, formation of identity, opportunities to use language and non-verbal communication, and overall social skills.

★ Recognize toddlers’ social awareness and interest in interacting with certain peers. Use children’s desire to play together to motivate them to learn more about the social rules of getting along with each other.

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**Keep Watching**

Ask Yourself

- Why is Padma roaming from one area to the next rather than engaging in focused play?
- How can I help Padma and Hoshi engage in play and learning?

**Give It a Try**

★ Recognize that toddlers get bored with experiences and materials that are not age and developmentally appropriate. Materials should vary in how challenging they are to help children practice current and emerging skills.

★ Get to know each toddler’s specific interests, likes and dislikes.

▲ Consider that roaming may indicate a child may need your help to engage in focused play experiences.

▲ Discover the meaning of each child’s behavior and respond accordingly.

▲ Make eye contact and use other non-verbal gestures, such as smiling, pointing, and nodding your head, to communicate and show interest.

▲ Comment on toddlers’ activities. Your words support language development and help them maintain their attention on their activity.

▲ Join in children’s play; talk about their ideas and ask questions.
Padma and Hoshi, 25 months old, are toddlers in Ms. Bernice’s family child care program. They have been together in child care since they were infants and have spent a great deal of time in each other’s company. They like to do the same thing at the same time. Ms. Bernice lets them select and pursue their own activity choices but they often have trouble finding something to do and maintaining their attention on an activity.

Ms. Bernice sees Padma looking around the room and asks, “What would like to do this morning?” Padma replies, “I want to paint.” “Well, let’s get you set up to be an artist.” Seeing Hoshi watching Padma and knowing they like to be together, Ms. Bernice invites him to paint too. Hoshi gives a big smile and hurries to the art center. The children put on their smocks, Ms. Bernice helping if needed, and she and the toddlers open the paints, fill the water cups and choose brushes together. Padma and Hoshi like to help and helping in the preparation makes each of them feel important and competent. It also teaches sequencing and the importance of being part of the group.

Padma hangs her paper and seeing that Hoshi is having trouble hanging his, she grabs hold of the corner of Hoshi’s paper and says, “I help you.” “Thank you, Padma, for helping Hoshi hang his paper,” says Ms. Bernice. Hoshi imitates Ms. Bernice, “Thank you, Padma.” Ms. Bernice, knowing Padma likes to have her stay near and interact with her, tells Padma, “I am going to warm Lee’s bottle and will be right back to see what you two have painted.” While caring for Lee, 4 months, Ms. Bernice looks over at the artists and says, “Hoshi, you painted many green dots all over your paper.” Hoshi looks at his paper, paints another dot, and looking at Ms. Bernice says, “I paint green dot.” Ms. Bernice smiles in response.


Ms. Bernice feeds Lee next to Padma and Hoshi so she can continue their interactions. She has realized that these ongoing interactions have helped Padma and Hoshi remain interested in this experience longer than they typically would and have reduced Padma’s and Hoshi’s roaming. She knows they will be choosing something else to do soon so she is preparing how to continue her interactions while doing other care giving duties. Also, she wonders how she can have them help in setting up other play and learning experiences, even routine care, to keep them engaged and learning.
Mr. Dwayne, a care teacher in the toddler room, just received a new package of posters and is eager to display them throughout his room. The next morning before the children arrive he hangs the posters in various learning and routine areas, matching the content of the poster with the functions of the area.

Hailey, 31 months, on her arrival notices the poster of bananas on the front of the refrigerator door while she helps her papa put her lunch away. “Look, bananas,” Hailey says as she points to the poster, “I have bananas.” Her papa smiles replying, “Yes you do, we packed a banana in your lunch today.” While Hailey’s papa gets her settled and then leaves, Sophie, 18 months, arrives with her mom, Mrs. Mast. As Mrs. Mast is putting Sophie’s lunch in the refrigerator, she points to the poster of the bananas and asks, “What are these, Sophie?” Sophie replies, “Nanas” as she grabs the poster. Mrs. Mast takes her hand and says, “No, Sophie.” Mr. Dwayne notices the interaction and realizes that Sophie may need some guidance near the posters.

As other children arrive, many have taken interest in the posters, pointing to them, asking, “What’s this?” and Mr. Dwayne happily talks about the posters. It isn’t long though before Ali, 19 months, has removed the posters depicting different meals in the dramatic play area and dropped them on the floor. Sophie returns to the eating area and removes the banana, tomato and peas posters. Hailey yells, “No, Sophie,” and tries to stick the posters back up. The food posters get destroyed in the process.

Mr. Dwayne helps Sophie and Hailey then observes Ali waving the butterfly and bird posters as he walks around. Mr. Dwayne is frustrated. He could tell the toddlers loved the posters, but now they are mostly destroyed.

“Make my environment ready for me to touch and freely explore so I can learn from it.”
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Displays are beneficial to a child’s learning when a few simple guidelines are followed. Keep displays relevant to the child’s world. Take photos of their community; include photos of family, friends, pets, their home, car or a city bus to help them identify with their world. Display pictures that show animals and nature in a photo style, rather than always in cartoon form. Pictures of ABCs and numbers are not appropriate for infants and toddlers and will not help young children learn the alphabet or to count. Change your display at least monthly to keep children interested. What is most important about using displays with infants and toddlers is your interaction. Talk about what is in the photo, ask simple questions, make up a story about the photo, and use descriptive words, such as colors, shapes and sounds. Magazines and inexpensive calendars make great resources for pictures. Displays can enhance any environment.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How should posters and other visual materials be displayed?
• What benefits, in addition to providing opportunities for interactions, do displays provide?

Give It a Try
▷ Display visual materials throughout the room to match areas, as Mr. Dwayne did, to help children make connections between experiences, initiate interactions and enhance learning.
▷ Post displays at child’s eye level to maximize the benefits of a display’s content and opportunities for interactions.
▷ Laminate display materials for durability.
▷ Use clear adhesive film that covers the entire display to secure it to the wall.
▷ Attach sticky backed Velcro® to the back of any displays and to the wall. Children can safely remove and reattach the display.
▷ Purchase commercially-made display cases to use in early care and education programs.
▷ Consider that appropriate displays create an interesting environment.
★ Talk about displays to introduce children to new vocabulary, help them understand relationships among peers and family, and to reinforce language skills.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why do toddlers sometimes tear things off the wall?
• What is the most appropriate response when Ali and Sophie take down the posters?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that younger toddlers may not understand that displays are to stay on the walls, and that they may have less ability to control their impulses.
★ Set realistic expectations about how toddlers explore their environment.
★ Expect children to be curious and to explore everything in their environment, including displays.
★ Explain to Ali and Sophie that posters stay on the wall for everyone to see. Show them how to touch the pictures without tearing them down.
★ Avoid shaming or humiliating the child.
Mr. Dwayne, a care teacher in the toddler room, just received a new package of posters and is eager to display them throughout his room. Knowing that the younger toddlers may not be able to resist tearing them down, he decides to wait to hang them until he gets a roll of clear adhesive film to mount them. He also decides to cover both sides of the posters with adhesive film for extra protection.

The following week he has all of his supplies and the posters are ready. He hangs the posters in various learning and routine areas matching the content of the posters with the functions of the area.

Hailey, 31 months, on her arrival notices the poster of bananas on the front of the refrigerator door while she helps her papa put her lunch away. “Look, bananas,” Hailey says as she points to the poster, “I have bananas.” Her papa smiles replying, “Yes you do, we packed a banana in your lunch today.” While Hailey’s papa gets her settled and then leaves, Sophie, 18 months, arrives with her mom, Mrs. Mast. As Mrs. Mast is putting Sophie’s lunch in the refrigerator, she points to the poster of the bananas and asks, “What are these, Sophie?” Sophie replies, “Nanas” as she grabs at the poster. But the poster is mounted with adhesive film to the refrigerator so Sophie can’t grasp it. Mrs. Mast says, “Yes, those are bananas. You like bananas don’t you?” Sophie nods her head yes.

As other children arrive, many have taken an interest in the posters, pointing to them and asking, “What’s this?” while Mr. Dwayne happily talks about the posters. Ali, 19 months, is patting the picture of spaghetti hung in the dramatic play area. Mr. Dwayne observes this and walks toward him saying, “Ali, what is that?” Ali replies, “Noodles.” Mr. Dwayne remarks, “Yes, those are spaghetti noodles. Do we have spaghetti in our play kitchen?” Ali looks around and finds plastic spaghetti in the toy food bin. He replies, “Here noodles” and puts it on a plate.

Mr. Dwayne sees Hailey and Sophie in the eating area pointing and talking to each other about the bananas, tomato and peas posters. Mr. Dwayne, seeing how the children are interested and enthusiastically communicating about the posters, makes a mental note to rotate the posters with other photos and pictures every three to four weeks to keep the interest of the children.
Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls and bottles while Eliza, 24 months, is reading books in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the active play area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. Eliza squeals in protest as Keeton’s trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps her book to the floor and then kicks it with his foot. Startled, Eliza scoots away to the far corner of the cozy area. Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up from the bathroom where she is helping a child use the toilet and says, “Keeton, don’t run into your friends with the trike. If you can’t keep it in the trike area, I will have to put it away.” Keeton pauses, looking at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him; then he is off again.

Meanwhile, Juanita reaches over and grabs Cole’s baby doll. Then she reaches to take the bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ’Nita, my bottle,” and holds tightly to the baby bottle. A tug of war ensues with both children yelling. Ms. Alix comes over to see what all of the noise is about. Keeton pushes the trike toward dramatic play. He is going pretty fast and bumps into Ms. Alix and Juanita before pedaling off again. Ms. Alix repeats herself, “Keeton, I told you to stay in the trike area. Get off that trike and go sit down in the cozy area.” Glaring at her, Keeton heads to the trike area, continuing to ride the trike. Ms. Alix makes sure Juanita is alright and gives the baby doll back to Cole before heading after Keeton.

When she catches up with Keeton, Ms. Alix kneels in front of the trike and stops him. She takes his hand, gently pulls him off of the trike, and walks him to the cozy area. “I told you to go to the cozy area. Sit here until you can listen to my words.” She sits him down and hands him a book. Keeton throws the book on the floor and kicks it with his foot. Ms. Alix takes him by the hand and says, “Keeton, you are hurting your friends and destroying the books. You’ll have to stay with me until you can listen to my words and do what you are supposed to do.” For the rest of play time, Ms. Alix holds Keeton’s hand and takes him with her as she goes about her duties.
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Impulse control is an essential part of a child’s developing emotion regulation and self-regulation. It starts developing in infancy and continues throughout the preschool years. A child in the process of learning impulse control can be challenging for an adult. A young toddler may only occasionally comply with a teacher’s expectations. An older toddler is likely to express understanding of some boundaries, but may not yet have developed enough self-control to attend to them consistently. Being patient with the learning process is key. With appropriate supervision, guidance, and support from responsive care teachers, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.
Give It a Try Key
△ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
● = Environment & Materials  ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why doesn’t Keeton follow my directions?
• Whose needs should I attend to in this situation, Keeton’s or Eliza’s?

Give It a Try
★ Help Keeton develop impulse control by stopping him from hurting others, encouraging him to follow social rules, and ensuring his needs will be met if he waits. Young toddlers, like Keeton, will likely not have the same ability to control their behavior as older toddlers.
△ Respond promptly to Eliza so she knows you are concerned about her. Validate her feelings and encourage her to tell Keeton not to hurt her again.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why did Juanita take Cole’s doll and baby bottle, instead of getting her own doll and baby bottle?
• How can I help Juanita and Cole learn to play together and reduce conflict?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that toddlers are all about “Me” and often seek instant gratification. They want “What they want, when they want it.” As children develop, they observe teacher modeling and learn how to solve problems.
› Provide duplicate popular toys to reduce fights over scarce resources. Let Juanita know that there are plenty of baby dolls. Show her where they are.
△ Play with children. Children will learn how to play with peers by playing with you.
△ Help children solve their problems by encouraging them to create solutions together. Accept their ideas for resolution; help them try out solutions.
△ When conflict occurs over possession of toys, hold the contested items in your hands during the brief resolution process. It takes the focus off whose toy it is and keeps the focus on the problem-solving process. Ensure children get toys back when the problem is resolved.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• Why doesn’t Keeton understand the danger of riding the trike around the room?
• How do I help Keeton comply with this important safety guideline?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that toddlers test boundaries and have not internalized adult rules, expectations and the possible consequences of unsafe behavior. Stay close to Keeton to help him comply with your expectations.
★ Keep in mind Keeton’s level of development when creating the environment and expectations.
› Create an environmental solution to the problem. Design a barrier or some visual separation between the trike area and other activity areas. Consider using painter’s tape on the floor, traffic cones, or low shelf units as dividers.
△ Encourage Keeton to stay inside the designated trike area by complimenting him when he does and by redirecting him if he doesn’t. Follow through and help him put the trike away and find something else to do if he isn’t able to keep it in the trike area.

Put It All Together

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Toddler 37
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Juanita, 22 months, and Cole, 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area with baby dolls while Eliza, 24 months, is reading in the cozy area. Keeton, 18 months, rides a push trike in the trike area. He rides out of the active play area and sails by Juanita and Cole, almost bumping into them. He turns, riding into the cozy area where Eliza squeals as the trike comes to rest against her leg. Keeton slaps the book she is reading out of her hand. Startled by his response, Eliza scoots to the far corner of the cozy area.

Care teacher, Ms. Alix, looks up and sees Keeton run into Eliza’s leg. Eliza tells Ms. Alix, who is comforting her, that Keeton hurt her leg with the trike. Ms. Alix responds, “I’m sorry Keeton hurt you. Let me look at your leg.” She notices that Keeton is ready to make another loop. She stops him, calmly saying, “Keeton, please get off the trike and come with me.” She leads Keeton over to the cozy area saying, “You hurt Eliza with your trike. I don’t allow trikes in the cozy area. Eliza, tell Keeton, ‘You hurt me; no bikes here.’” Ms. Alix asks Keeton to pick up the book and return it to Eliza. Eliza takes it and sits down to read.

Meanwhile, Juanita grabs Cole’s baby doll and tries to take the baby bottle away from him. He yells, “No, ‘Nita, my bottle,” and holds on tightly. A tug of war ensues.

Ms. Alix holds out her hands saying, “Let me hold the doll and bottle while we figure out what to do.” The children, familiar with Ms. Alix’s problem solving strategy, hand them over. She asks what the problem is and listens to both children’s descriptions. She restates what she heard. “Juanita grabbed Cole’s baby and wanted his baby bottle. Is that right?” Both children nod. Ms. Alix says, “How can we solve this problem?” Cole says, “My doll.” Juanita says, “My doll.” Ms. Alix points to the doll bed and says, “Look, Juanita, there are more dolls.” Ms. Alix says to Cole, “Here is your doll and bottle,” and then hands another doll and bottle to Juanita saying, “This is your baby doll.”

Keeton zooms by. Ms. Alix gently stops him and takes him to the trike area. She points to the floor where two strips of red tape define the trike area. “You can ride your trike anywhere between the red taped lines. When you ride your trike outside of the red tape, children get hurt. I won’t allow that to happen. If you can’t keep your trike inside the lines, I’ll put it away and help you find another place to play.” Keeton looks at Ms. Alix while she speaks to him. He nods and rides off staying inside the red lines. When he rides by her she comments, “Your trike is inside the red tape. Thanks for listening.” Keeton beams at her and continues to ride inside the trike area. Ms. Alix stays close to make sure he is able to control the urge to ride outside of the trike area.

Social Development:
The child will understand and respond to the emotions of others.

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize herself or himself as a person with an identity, wants, needs, interests, likes and dislikes.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will participate in interactions with language that follow the expected practices of the child’s family and community.
So Aggressive...With Things

Andrew, age 27 months, is a busy toddler. When he arrives at his family child care program, he runs into the house, happy to be there. His care teacher, Ms. Evelyn, greets him and turns to talk to his dad while Andrew joins Erica, 19 months, who is playing with a baby doll. The adults chat briefly and exchange information on Andrew’s night and morning; dad waves good-bye and leaves. Ms. Evelyn sees Andrew throwing a baby doll across the room. She walks over asking him what he is doing. He hangs his head, picks up the baby doll and gives it to her; he walks to the block area.

Andrew roughly knocks over the wagon of blocks creating a loud noise, making himself laugh. Ms. Evelyn is rocking Josie, 3 months, and asks Andrew to be quiet so she can finish putting her to sleep. He sits down, stacks the blocks into a tower and leans back to admire his work. Then, he kicks the building down with his foot. “Build with the blocks Andrew, don’t kick them,” reminds Ms. Evelyn. He looks at her then pulls his knees into his chest and kicks the blocks across the floor with both feet, sending them sliding. Ms. Evelyn puts a sleeping Josie into her crib and walks over to talk with Andrew. “Throwing baby dolls and kicking blocks are not allowed. You need to put the blocks in the wagon if you are done playing with them,” she explains. She leaves him to do the work and picks up a book to read to Erica.

Andrew ignores her request to pick up the blocks and instead picks up a ball. It slips out of his hands, rolls away and Andrew follows it. When he catches up, he gives it a kick, sending it flying across the room. His reaction shows that he thinks that was pretty fun so he finds the ball again and gives it another whack with his foot. This time it lands in Josie’s crib. By now, Ms. Evelyn is tired of his misbehavior. She takes Andrew gently by the hand and sits on the couch with him for a few minutes, reminding him he must use the toys the right way, and not kick and throw them.

“I will create my own “fun” so talk and play with me to help me stay engaged in play.”
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More about...a toddler's identity

Toddlers are all about “me.” They have a sense of who they are and how they are connected to others. They are learning to make choices, which can be difficult for them and for you. They enjoy their sense of independence and competence and the ability to make things happen in their world. At the same time, toddlers still need you as their secure base. They need to know you are there to meet their physical and emotional needs and to provide interesting and challenging opportunities for play and learning. Toddlers use actions as a way to signal what they want and need from you: to talk with them, play with them, engage them. Though some of these actions may not be desirable, the toddlers are telling you something; be prepared to “listen” and act.
Take Another Look

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I help Andrew get involved in an activity when he arrives?
- How can I get the information I need from Andrew’s dad in a quick and efficient way?

**Give It a Try**
- Set out a few of Andrew’s favorite toys or activities before he arrives, drawing his attention to them upon arrival. Rotate toys/activities frequently.
- Encourage parent participation in arrival and departure transitions. Suggest to Andrew’s dad that he take a few minutes to get involved with Andrew in an activity before leaving.
- Warmly greet parent and child, keep conversation centered on the child.
- Use a daily recording form for parents to document a child’s home experiences, which will help you care for him that day. Include information on eating, sleeping, changes in routine, health, mood or new information. Explain to parents why this information and form are important.

Keep Watching

**Ask Yourself**
- Why does Andrew throw the toys instead of play with them?
- How do I encourage Andrew to stay with an activity for longer periods of time?
- Why won’t Andrew stop when I tell him not to throw or kick the toys?

**Give It a Try**
- Consider that toddlers are curious learners. They learn about cause and effect by causing things to happen. They explore the actions and reactions of objects and people, even through inappropriate behavior.
- Tune in to Andrew’s intention. He may be behaving inappropriately to get your attention.
- Consider that toddlers may have short attention spans. Attention span differs among individuals and increases as a child ages.
- Engage in activities with children. Play alongside of them, following their lead. Modeling peer play is an effective teaching strategy.
- Offer additional materials and experiences with toys/activities to pique curiosity and extend learning. For example, provide toy animals/people and vehicles for block play.
- Give children plenty of time to experiment and create their own play. Children learn more when they choose activities that interest them.
- Adjust your expectations and supervision to align with each child’s developing ability to control behavior. Being responsive to children during routines, and in play, also helps children develop impulse control.
- Provide reminders (e.g., “Stack the blocks.”) and prompts (e.g., “What is your baby doll hungry for?”) to help Andrew stay focused.
- Stay close by children in play. Use your proximity, and verbal and non-verbal cues to supervise play.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Andrew, age 27 months, is a busy toddler. When he arrives with his dad at his family child care program, he runs into the house, happy to be there. His care teacher, Ms. Evelyn, and Andrew’s family worked together on a plan to help Andrew transition into her care as part of their morning routine. Several of Andrew’s favorite toys are set out for him to play with upon arrival. Ms. Evelyn has also added a daily recording form for the family to provide information she might need for the day.

Upon arrival, Ms. Evelyn warmly welcomes them and Andrew dashes to the toy construction set; it is his favorite activity. Andrew’s dad joins him in play and completes the daily recording form while sitting with Andrew. To help Andrew transition, Andrew’s dad tells him he needs to leave soon. When it is time to go, his dad gives him a kiss and hug, and says good-bye.

Ms. Evelyn sees that Andrew is still engaged with the construction set so she joins Erica, 19 months, who is playing with a baby doll. After a few minutes, Andrew says he wants a baby and joins them. Ms. Evelyn knows Andrew likes to play pretend so she has added doll furniture and accessories, such as a stroller, blankets, dishes, spoons, play food, a doll bed and highchair, to extend his learning and spark his imagination. To build his language, social and cognitive skills, Ms. Evelyn asks what his baby doll’s name is, what he is feeding her, and what he and the baby doll are going to do today. Ms. Evelyn also plays alongside Erica and her baby doll, modeling peer play.

Andrew plays in the block area, roughly knocking the wagon of blocks over, creating a very loud noise and making himself laugh. Ms. Evelyn reminds Andrew that the wagon is not for knocking over; he needs to play with the blocks or put them back in the wagon. He stacks the blocks up into a tall tower and leans back to admire his work. He looks for Ms. Evelyn who is rocking Josie, 3 months. Not seeing a response from Ms. Evelyn, he kicks the tower down. Ms. Evelyn, hearing the commotion, reminds Andrew that blocks are not for kicking; he will have to put them away if he kicks them again. Knowing toddlers enjoy building and toppling blocks, Ms. Evelyn reminds him he can topple the blocks with a gentle push of his hand, but kicking is not allowed. She also suggests that he choose some toy animals, people and vehicles, which are in the block area, to use with his blocks. He tells her he is going to get the cars and build a house for them. Animated, she responds, “You came up with an idea.” He smiles and gets to work.

While Ms. Evelyn continues to rock Josie, she occasionally asks Andrew to describe what he is doing, and to tell her about his house and cars. She watches for his eye contact so she can respond verbally or with a smile.

Cognitive Development: The child will be able to mirror, repeat and practice the actions modeled by another.

Emotional Development: The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

Cognitive Development: The child will learn to group people and objects based on their attributes.
Mouthing

Kerrie, 24 months, and Shauna, 26 months, are playing in the dramatic play area during free play in Ms. Patti’s classroom. The area has a collection of play furniture and a variety of dramatic play materials including baby dolls and baby bottles, a variety of play food, plates, bowls and spoons. Ms. Patti sits nearby and occasionally talks with the children as they play.

Kerrie and Shauna are playing with the baby dolls when Shauna picks up a baby bottle and puts it in her own mouth. Kerrie, wanting to mimic Shauna and not seeing another baby bottle, grabs a toy banana and puts it in her mouth. Ms. Patti notices the girls and says, “Girls, take those out of your mouths please. Those are for pretend. Feed the babies.” The girls give them to their babies, but immediately lose interest.

Shauna and Kerrie discover the food in the play refrigerator. They grab a piece of food and take a “bite” then giggling, drop it on the floor. They are thoroughly enjoying themselves. Ms. Patti, hearing the laughter and seeing their actions, decides to intervene. “Girls that food is for pretend, not for putting in your mouth. Now we need to put it away because it is dirty. Here, take the spoons and bowls and feed your babies.” Ms. Patti puts the baby dolls in the chairs and hands the girls bowls and spoons. Ms. Patti picks up the soiled play food and puts it aside to be cleaned and sanitized at a later time. When she checks on Shauna and Kerrie, they now have the play spoons in their mouths. Frustrated, Ms. Patti says, “Give me the spoons please. You two need to leave this area and find another place to play.”
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Many older toddlers have lost the urge to mouth objects as a way of learning about the world around them. You may, however, observe children putting items in their mouths. As children develop at their own pace, some older toddlers still have the need for oral exploration. Older toddlers love to imitate and play pretend and as with younger children, they bite objects during the teething process. To meet the individual needs of toddlers as they grow, provide safe and appropriate materials and interact and play with them to extend their learning and to guide and support their behavior.
Take Another Look

**Ask Yourself**
- Why do older toddlers mouth toys and materials?
- How can I prevent the girls from putting the dramatic play materials in their mouths?
- How can I keep a healthy and safe environment?

**Give It a Try**
- Understand that toddlers, especially younger toddlers, learn by using all of their senses. This includes using mouthing, also known as oral exploration, to learn about textures, density (hard/soft), taste, and how things fit in space.
- Recognize that some children have a sensory need to continually mouth objects. Provide them with appropriate teethers throughout the day.
- Supervise play, calmly telling children what they can do with dramatic play materials and what behavior needs stopped.
- Interact with children during pretend play. Suggest play ideas such as rocking the doll to sleep after feeding it. This may focus the toddlers on play and reduce mouthing incidents.
- Explain and model how the girls might act out play ideas without mouthing. For example, demonstrate how to “feed the babies.”

Keep Watching

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I teach toddlers that play food is not for mouthing?
- What strategies could I use to support pretend play?

**Give It a Try**
- Set appropriate expectations. Take time to explain what they can and cannot do with play food/dishes and why.
- Gently remind toddlers of the rules as they begin pretend play and when an instance of mouthing occurs. Children need to be reminded frequently of the rules as they are learning to understand the concept of pretend play.
- Build on toddlers’ ideas. Ask Shauna what her baby wants to eat after drinking her bottle. Help children follow through on their ideas.
- Engage children in pretend play. When Kerrie removes play food from the refrigerator, ask if she will “cook” you lunch, which leads to “eating” lunch. This is an opportunity to model pretend play behaviors.
- Extend play and learning. Suggest additional activities that focus on children’s play, such as “bathing” babies and taking babies on a walk.
- Add language to your interactions to increase children’s understanding of concepts, to build vocabulary and to develop their social communication skills.
- Remove mouthed materials from the classroom. Clean and sanitize before returning them. Add a variety of materials to the environment that are clean and ready for play so children have materials during the cleaning/sanitizing process.
- Frequently check materials for damage. Discard or, if possible, repair. Rotate plenty of additional materials into play so a variety are accessible for play.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Kerrie, 24 months, and Shauna, 26 months, are playing in the dramatic play area during free play in Ms. Patti’s classroom. The area has a collection of play furniture and a variety of dramatic play materials including baby dolls and baby bottles, play food, plates, bowls and spoons.

Ms. Patti has joined the girls saying, “Looks like you girls are taking care of babies.” Knowing that Kerrie and Shauna tend to mouth the play food, Ms. Patti reminds them, “Remember that the babies’ bottles and the play food are for pretend. Hold the bottle and food to the baby’s mouth. It doesn’t go in your mouth.”

Seeing Shauna pick up the baby bottle, Ms. Patti says, “Shauna, is your baby hungry for her bottle?” as a reminder that the bottle is for the doll, not for Shauna. Shauna nods her head “yes” and feeds her baby. Kerrie, watching Shauna, puts a play banana up to her doll’s mouth. Ms. Patti asks, “Kerrie, what is your baby eating?” Kerrie replies, “A banana. She is hungry.” Ms. Patti responds, “I like bananas too. What do you like to eat?” Kerrie replies, “Cheese.” “Mmmm, cheese is good. Does your baby want cheese?” asks Ms. Patti. Kerrie replies, “Yes, I check,” and looks in the play refrigerator.

During the conversation with Kerrie, Ms. Patti noticed Shauna mouthing the doll’s bottle. Ms. Patti didn’t want to interrupt her exchange with Kerrie, but now that Kerrie is looking for something to feed her doll, Ms. Patti addresses Shauna. “Shauna, that bottle is for the doll, not for you. If you want to pretend to drink from the bottle, do it like this.” Ms. Patti models how to pretend “drink” and makes a drinking noise. Shauna giggles and pretends to drink from the bottle too. “That’s right, Shauna,” comments Ms. Patti. Shauna starts feeding her baby again and says, “Me do it.” Ms. Patti remembers to put the bottle in the soiled toy container when Shauna is done with it. Ms. Patti knows there are several other bottles the children can play with until this one is cleaned.

As Kerrie looks for cheese for her doll, she begins removing food from the play refrigerator and soon Shauna is clearing out the refrigerator with her. Understanding that the girls might be tempted to “eat” the food, Ms. Patti decides to suggest an activity that uses the play food since they appear to be interested in it. “Girls, would you make me lunch? I’m hungry.” Kerrie shouts, “Yes!” and she and Shauna busily put food on the table. “Shauna, may I have a plate to put my orange on?” asks Ms. Patti. Shauna finds a plate and spoon, puts an orange on the plate and hands it to Ms. Patti. Kerrie says, “I cook corn,” as she puts it in a play microwave. Ms. Patti and the girls continue serving lunch and pretend to eat it.
Mr. Landon cares for toddlers between the ages of 16 and 36 months. Carson, 19 months, and Nila, 21 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Carson tips over the container of baby dolls and doll clothing in search of a doll. After sifting through the materials, he chooses a baby doll and lays it on the table beside him. Carson walks through the dolls and clothing scattered on the floor to reach the bin of play food, dishes, pots and pans. He turns the food and dish bin upside down and dumps the contents onto the floor.

Catching Nila’s attention, both he and Nila spread out the items while searching for what they want. Carson finds a baby doll’s bottle which he “feeds” to his doll. Nila, turning to put play food into the toddler-sized grocery cart, notices it is already full of an assortment of dramatic play materials, such as toy phones, dress-up hats, a plush animal, and items for a play doctor’s kit. She proceeds to turn the cart on its side and scoops out the materials. Once she sets it upright, she puts her play food into the cart, but when she tries to push the cart it is blocked by the materials dumped on the floor.

Mr. Landon notices the mess Carson and Nila have made and joins them in the dramatic play area. In a friendly tone of voice he says, “What did you two do? You made a big mess. We need to clean this up.” Mr. Landon scoops the items up off the floor and puts them back in the bins. He takes the assortment of dramatic play materials that Nila dumped out of the cart and places them on an empty shelf. “No more dumping. Now you two have room to play,” he says after clearing the floor.

"If I can easily see what I can play with, I learn more and may create less clutter."
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An organized environment that meets the needs of children extends their learning experiences, provides opportunities for complex play, is a beginning step on teaching children organizational skills and reduces clutter. Organizing materials takes little time and saves time for teachers and children when searching for materials for learning and play. Also, materials can be forgotten when buried under other materials, which leads to missed learning opportunities. Using small containers and child-size shelving to store similar items that children can see at a glance provides many benefits for a developing child.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

- Why do toddlers dump containers of materials?

Give It a Try

★ Acknowledge that toddlers are active explorers and are interested in seeing what happens when they empty and fill up different types of containers. Dumping also allows toddlers to see all available items at a glance.
★ Consider that toddlers have not fully developed the self-control needed to patiently search for items of interest.
★ Recognize that a child’s temperament influences how a child reacts to the environment.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

- How do I adapt to a toddler’s interest in dumping materials and at the same time avoid too much clutter in the environment?
- How can I arrange the environment so toddlers can easily see available play materials?

Give It a Try

› Organize similar materials together. Store play food in a separate container than play dishes; store dolls separately from doll clothing.
› Limit the number of like materials accessible to toddlers. Too many play food items, for example, can create clutter and hinder toddlers from easily finding items they desire. But be sure to provide enough variety of play food items so children aren’t competing and have enough materials for complex play.
› Rotate extra toys into play every two weeks.
› Use small size bins (e.g. shoebox size). It is helpful for toddlers to have two smaller bins of play food, rather than one big bin.
› Place items on shelves in an organized manner by keeping similar items together (e.g. all toy phones together) and space materials so toddlers can see at a glance what is available for play.
★ Be a role model when searching and re-shelving materials. Toddlers imitate what they see.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Mr. Landon cares for toddlers between the ages of 16 and 36 months. Carson, 19 months, and Nila, 21 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Carson sees four baby dolls on the shelf; he chooses one and then lays it on the table beside him. He also takes one of the baby doll’s bottles that is sitting next to the baby dolls on the shelf. Carson “feeds” his baby doll that is laying on the table.

Meanwhile, Nila pulls out one of the two small food bins and turns it over, dumping the five play food items that were stored in it onto the floor. Mr. Landon, sitting nearby, watches Nila choose the “taco” and “box of rice” from the pile and then put them into the toddler-sized shopping cart. Mr. Landon comments, “Nila, it looks like you are shopping at the grocery store. Are you going to use the food items on the floor? If not, let’s put them back in the bin.” He holds out the bin, and Nila picks up the items from the floor and puts them back in the bin. Then Nila says, “Go store,” and pushes her cart around the room. Mr Landon asks, “Do you want to wear a hat to the store?” Nila smiles saying, “Yes,” and chooses a dress-up hat sitting on top of the child-size shelf that separates the dramatic play area from the block area.

Nila pushes her cart into the dramatic play area and spots three toy phones on the shelf. She chooses one and holding it to her ear says, “Hello.” She drops the phone into the grocery cart and pushes the cart around the room again. Carson, watching Nila, picks up another phone and holds it to his ear too. Mr. Landon, seeing Carson with the phones, joins him and pretends to talk on the other toy phone saying, “Hello, Carson.” Carson replies, “Hello, Carson.”

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the movements of his or her body in order to move and to interact with the environment.

Cognitive Development:
The child will be able to mirror, repeat and practice the actions modeled by another.

Social Development:
The child will engage in give-and-take exchanges with an adult.
Anetria, 27 months, and Seth, 30 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. There are two prop boxes – one is the firefighter prop box and the other is the hats prop box. Anetria has the firefighter’s hat on her head and is pulling the hoses, made of 2 feet long pieces of garden hose, out of the firefighter’s prop box. Seth is watching what Anetria is doing. After watching for a couple of minutes, Seth pulls the hat off of Anetria’s head. She looks at him and says, “My hat!” He turns and walks away, picking up a piece of hose on the way.

Anetria screams, begins to cry, and jumps up and down, flailing her hands and arms. Soon she collapses on the floor, still screaming. Her family child care teacher, Ms. Brenda, comes over and says, “Calm down, Anetria. You are disturbing your friends.” Anetria’s tantrum continues.

Ms. Brenda tries to distract Anetria saying, “Why don’t you and I go play with the puzzles?” offering her a hand. Anetria screams even louder and hits Ms. Brenda with her flailing arms. Ms. Brenda wonders what to try next.

Watch
Tantrumming

I need your guidance so I can learn how to resolve disagreements.
Anetria, 27 months, and Seth, 30 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. There are two prop boxes – one is the firefighter prop box and the other is the hats prop box. Anetria has the firefighter’s hat on her head and is pulling the hoses, made of 2 feet long pieces of garden hose, out of the firefighter’s prop box. Seth is watching what Anetria is doing. After watching for a couple of minutes, Seth pulls the hat off of Anetria’s head. She looks at him and says, “My hat!” He turns and walks away, picking up a piece of hose on the way.

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Tantrums are one way a child expresses her feelings. They are part of typical development during the older mobile infant and toddler years. Tantrums are not completely preventable, but a knowledgeable, skillful approach may help you to “catch” some tantrums before they start. You need to understand child development, know each child’s capabilities and triggers, read each child’s cues, and be “extra” observant in potential tantrum situations. Then you can interact instead of having to react. Remember, tantrums are more frequent when a child is tired, bored, hungry or frustrated. Be prepared and have a plan to prevent and interact.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why did Seth take Anetria’s firefighter’s hat instead of getting his own hat?
• How can I help Seth and Anetria learn to play together and reduce conflict?

Give It a Try
☆ Recognize that toddlers are all about “me” and often seek instant gratification. They want “what they want, when they want it.” As children develop, they learn how to solve problems by following teacher guidance and observing teacher modeling of behavior.
▷ Provide duplicate popular toys to reduce fights over scarce resources.
▲ Join in play with children. Children will learn how to play with peers by playing with you.
▲ Help children solve their problems by encouraging them to create solutions together. Accept their ideas for resolution; help them try out solutions.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• Why is Anetria’s reaction to the situation so intense?
• What are strategies to address Anetria’s behavior?

Give It a Try
☆ Consider that some young children are further along than others in learning to control their impulses and self-regulate their behavior.
☆ Recognize that strong reactions are one of the ways young children communicate their frustration.
☆ Consider each child’s temperament. Children will react differently to similar situations based on their temperament.
▲ Validate Anetria’s intense emotions. Label them so she knows you understand her feelings. “You are mad that Seth took your hat.”
▲ Use a quiet, reassuring voice. Give yourself a moment to calm down, rather than responding with anger.
▲ Give Anetria time to calm herself before trying to resolve the situation. Stay close so she knows you are available but avoid interacting with her directly until she gains control of her emotions.
▷ Let Anetria calm down in the cozy area with her security object, such as a favorite blanket or plush animal, if she chooses. Offer to help her get comfortable.
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Anetria screams, begins to cry, and jumps up and down, flailing her hands and arms. Soon she collapses on the floor, still screaming. The family child care teacher, Ms. Brenda, comes over to the area, kneels down at Anetria’s eye level and says, “You are very upset. You didn’t want Seth to take your hat.” Putting her hand gently on Anetria’s back she asks, “Do you want me to sit with you?” Anetria is inconsolable, twists away from Ms. Brenda and continues to cry loudly. Ms. Brenda tells Anetria, “I’ll help you get a hat when you are done screaming and calm down.” Ms. Brenda attends to other children while keeping an eye on Anetria.

“Seth, Anetria is upset because you took her hat. She would like her hat back. What can you do to help her?” Seth replies, “This is my hat,” holding the hat on his head. “That’s Anetria’s hat,” says Seth pointing to the other firefighter’s hat. “Let’s see if she wants it when she comes back to play,” says Ms. Brenda.

After a couple of minutes, Anetria begins to calm. Seeing Seth and Ms. Brenda talking in the dramatic play area, Anetria goes to Ms. Brenda and snuggles beside her. Knowing the toddlers are learning to problem solve, Ms. Brenda helps them through the process. Mr. Brenda says, “Anetria, Seth has something for you. Seth, what do you want to do with the hat?” Seth hands Anetria a firefighter’s hat and says, “Here you go.” “Anetria, look what Seth has for you. Would you like to wear it?” asks Ms. Brenda. Anetria nods her head “yes” and puts the hat on. Ms. Brenda thanks Seth and asks both of them if they want to play with the fire hoses. They both say, “Yes,” eagerly and make siren sounds as they carry the hoses around the dramatic play area.

**Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action**

Anetria is expressing her emotions through her actions and words. Seth is learning how to respond to Anetria’s emotions andms.

**Emotional Development:**
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.

**Social Development:**
The child will understand and respond to the emotions of others. The child will engage with other children.
Running

Watch

Mr. Troy and Ms. Alethea are care teachers for a group of toddlers. They have arranged all of the furniture and equipment so it backs up to the walls around the edges of the room. The teachers thought this would allow for a larger open space for children to play and for different learning experiences to occur. The play and learning areas arranged around the room include dramatic play, blocks and vehicles, manipulatives and music, and a cozy book area. Tables used for meals and snacks are off to one side of the room.

Yin, 23 months, and Diego, 19 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Suddenly, Yin dashes across the carpet to the block area. Mr. Troy calls to her saying, “Don’t run, Yin.” Yin looks at him, smiles, picks up a block and runs back. She puts the block to her ear saying, “Hi, Mommy,” pretending it is a toy telephone. Diego, liking her idea, runs and gets a block for himself. Seeing Diego, Ms. Alethea says, “Diego, didn’t you hear Mr. Troy? No running. It is dangerous.”

Bailey, 30 months, finished looking at the books in the cozy area, runs to the manipulative area and slides to a stop near the shelf. Mr. Troy calls to her and says, “Bailey, stop running please. Walk in the classroom.” Shelby, 22 months, seeing Bailey pull a pegboard off the shelf, runs to join her. Shelby chooses the other pegboard and they play side by side on the floor. Tired of reminding children to walk and frustrated that they won’t, Mr. Troy ignores Shelby’s running.

“I am driven to move, and move fast when I can. Arrange the room so I can be safe.”
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Giving toddlers opportunities to use their large muscles, such as by running, walking, climbing, pedaling, steering and balancing, gives them additional opportunities to learn and develop besides just working on their muscle skills. When engaged in large muscle (motor) experiences, children are building up their physical strength. Engaging in exercise is known to help bodies stay healthy, and just makes people feel better emotionally. As children interact with the environment and equipment, they solve problems and even feel confident to try a new challenge. Once they have success, they build the confidence to try again! Toddlers develop socially through interactions with peers, communicating and using language during these interactions. Running is more than getting from one point to the next; it is learning on the go!
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• How can the room be arranged so toddlers might be less likely to run?

Give It a Try

★ Consider the age, skills and developmental needs of children using the environment. Evaluate how your space meets these needs.

› Realize that children react to their environment. Larger open areas encourage running, whereas smaller defined areas encourage more focused play and learning.

› Arrange an open space in the middle of the room to be a flexible space used for different purposes, though not a large wide-open space that may encourage running.

★ Identify toddler behaviors that are unsafe or not appropriate for the space. Assess furniture arrangement and determine how it is affecting behavior.

› Arrange furniture to encourage safe and free movement that allows for easy supervision.

› Use low, stable child-size shelving, risers and furniture as dividers between play areas.

› Use areas for something other than their original purpose. For example, draw, paint, and assemble puzzles at the meal/snack table.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• How can I encourage children not to run in the room?

Give It a Try

★ Consider that toddlers will move whether it is safe to move or not. Toddlers, due to their developmental stage, are not often able to foresee hazardous situations.

▲ Talk to Yin at eye level and in close proximity about what you want her to do, namely walk, instead of run.

▲ Show Shelby the gesture for “stop” and describe what she is to do when she sees the signal.

▲ Recognize that toddlers need frequent reminders. Reminders should be brief and stated in a pleasant, but firm, tone of voice.

◆ Allow frequent opportunities for large muscle movement, such as dancing, climbing and running.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Mr. Troy and Ms. Alethea are care teachers for toddlers in a small classroom. Understanding that toddlers love to move and move fast, and knowing it is unsafe to run in their room, they have arranged the room to eliminate large open spaces and eliminate a straight path that cuts through the room.

The teachers separate the space into play and learning areas using low, stable child-size shelf units and child-size furniture such as dramatic play chairs and a table. The shelves with manipulatives, like puzzles, pegboards, and lacing beads are positioned by the meal/snack table so toddlers can work at these tables, have a steady surface for play and are out of other toddler's traffic. The cozy book area is away from the block area, which can get pretty noisy. The middle of the room is an open space that can be used for a variety of experiences.

These different areas comfortably accommodate two to three toddlers, plus the teachers and leave adequate space for the toddlers to move about, and manipulate and use the materials in various ways. Some areas need more space than others. There is space near the meal/snack table for special experiences that may need more room.

Even with the room arranged to help toddlers slow down, they still move as they desire, though they can’t pick up much speed when they run since furniture is strategically placed to break up the room. Yin, 23 months, and Diego, 19 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Suddenly, Yin hurries to the block area and picks up a block. Mr. Troy seeing her, walks to her, kneels down and looking into her eyes says, “Yin, you must walk. Are you going back to Diego?” Yin nods “yes.” Mr. Troy reminds her, “Please walk back,” as he walks beside her. When she gets back to the dramatic play area, she puts the block to her ear saying, “Hi, Mommy,” pretending it is a toy telephone. Diego, liking Yin’s idea, heads off to get a block too; Mr. Troy says, “Diego, walk to the blocks,” as he walks with Diego.

Ms. Alethea knows it is difficult to shadow toddlers who love to run. As a way to help them remember, and looking for an alternative to calling for them to “slow down” across the room, she shows the toddlers the “stop” sign; holding her hand up, palm out. Bailey, 30 months, finished looking at the books in the cozy area, scurries to the manipulative area. Seeing Bailey do this, Ms. Alethea watches for Shelby, 22 months, who might imitate Bailey, as the two children were playing in the same area. Shelby starts to take off; Ms. Alethea says, “Shelby” and holds up her hand in a “stop” gesture. Shelby, seeing the gesture, slows down.

Social Development:
The child will have an awareness of his or her relationship to others in a group.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the movements of his or her body in order to move and to interact with the environment.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will comprehend the message of another’s communication.
Climbing

Watch

Mr. Chad is having a pretend meal in the dramatic play area with Jocelyn, 20 months, and Lucy, 28 months, while Ms. Kendra is assisting Marshall, 28 months, with toileting. Mr. Chad scans the room and notices Nia, 24 months, standing tall on top of the table the toddlers use for eating and manipulative play. Mr. Chad anxiously calls to her, “Nia, get down! We don’t climb on tables.” Nia looks at Mr. Chad but doesn’t move.

Mr. Chad lifts Nia off of the table saying, “That is dangerous. Keep your feet on the floor. Now go and play.” Mr. Chad waits until Nia is headed away from the table and rejoins Jocelyn and Lucy. Mr. Chad notices Nia looking out the window and is pleased she has found something else to do.

Marshall reenters the play space after toileting and quickly locates Nia and joins her at the window. The two start giggling and running around the room. Mr. Chad yells to them, “Nia and Marshall, quit running and find something to play with.” The two stop and look at Mr. Chad as he continues, “Ms. Kendra will be out in a minute to play with you.” Mr. Chad decides he needs to clean up the dramatic play pretend lunch with Jocelyn and Lucy so he can pay more attention to Nia and Marshall.

In the meantime, Ms. Kendra comes back into the play space and spots Nia on top of the table and Marshall climbing on the chair on his way to the table top. Ms. Kendra scoops Nia off of the table and stops Marshall. She tells them, “Mr. Chad said to stay off the table. Now go sit in the cozy area and look at some books until you can quit climbing.” Ms. Kendra walks them to the cozy area, and then stacks the chairs so the children can’t use them to get onto the table.
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Toddlers are wired to try out their newly discovered skills. Once they have “tried them out” they want and need to practice them. Adventurers at heart, they constantly seek something different to try – adding a new move, or even an old move to the skill they are practicing. Soon, they will begin practicing another new motor skill. This self-directed exploration is an important part of a child’s motor, cognitive and emotional development. Remember, toddlers are still learning what furnishings are used for. Your gentle guidance plus daily opportunities to practice skills will keep children safe, help them learn rules of behavior and support their development.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why do toddlers climb on equipment not meant for climbing?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that children enjoy new challenges and receive satisfaction in the ability to do them.
★ Consider that children are wired to move. Learning is enhanced by experiences with the environment.
★ Tune in to what Nia is trying to communicate. She may be behaving inappropriately to get your attention.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How should I respond to Nia’s and Marshall’s inappropriate behavior?
• What can I do to help prevent climbing?

Give It a Try
▲ Help Nia off of the table for her safety.
▲ Give brief statements to help children understand necessary limits and offer appropriate choices. “I will not let you climb on the table. You may climb on the climber.”
▲ Avoid threats. Acknowledge a child’s interest in a new challenge. Guide a child’s behavior to a similar activity.
▽ Resist the impulse to remove materials, including chairs, from the environment.
★ Adjust your expectations and supervision to align with each child’s developing ability to control behavior.
▽ Keep in mind a toddler’s level of development when creating the environment and expectations.
▲ Set up engaging, high interest activities for children to do during routine times. Help children get involved in exploration and learning before you become involved in interactions/routines with other children.
▲ Engage Nia and Marshall in play. Make eye contact often and talk with them about their activities.
▲ Calmly, briefly, firmly and frequently remind children of classroom rules.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• Why don’t children respond to my limit-setting instructions?
• What are additional opportunities for active physical play?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that toddlers test boundaries and have not fully learned adult rules, expectations and the possible consequences of unsafe behavior. Keep in mind that even if toddlers know a rule, they may not yet have developed enough impulse control to follow the rule without adult reminders.
▽ Schedule outdoor active play twice a day. Dress children appropriately for the weather, adjusting outdoor time based on weather conditions.
▽ Allow frequent opportunities for safe and appropriate large muscle movement, including climbing and running, so children have interesting alternatives to using furniture to climb.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Mr. Chad and Ms. Kendra care for an active group of toddlers. Lately, several of the children have been interested in climbing and tend to do it when the teachers are busy with routines. So the teachers decided to make changes to the environment, as well as with their supervision and interaction practices, so the children will avoid climbing on furnishings. The teachers wish their room was large enough for a small climber but it is too small to add one safely.

Mr. Chad is having a pretend meal with Jocelyn, 20 months, and Lucy, 18 months, in the dramatic play area. Ms. Kendra prepares new activities that may engage the toddlers while she is conducting routine care. Already this morning Nia, 24 months, needed reminding that climbing is not allowed on the table, so they know their additions of new materials will interest her. First Ms. Kendra sets out a basket of balls and a toddler-size basketball hoop which will provide active play.

Then Ms. Kendra creates tunnels out of four different size cardboard boxes by placing them on their sides with all ends open. She spaces them near one another but doesn’t connect them so children can leave and enter the tunnel at any point. Ms. Kendra specifically shows the tunnels to Nia since she particularly enjoys active play.

“Mr. Chad and I have something special for you to do. We made these tunnels for you and your friends to crawl through. You can play in the tunnels.” Ms. Kendra points to a tunnel opening and says, “You crawl through.” She stays a minute to watch and help Nia engage in play if necessary before continuing with the toileting routine.

Nia is excited as she finds her way through the tunnels. She discovers she needs to crouch down in the lower boxes and can keep her head higher in the taller boxes. Mr. Chad, still having his pretend meal, catches Nia’s eye and says, “Nia, you crawl quickly through the tunnel.” She smiles and replies, “I go in tunnel,” turns and back through the tunnel she goes. When Nia pops out the other end she eagerly says, “Here I am.” Mr. Chad responds, “You made it through the whole tunnel!” This interaction is repeated a few more times.

Marshall, 28 months, through with toileting runs to join Nia. Giggling, they start through the tunnels. Nia then lies up against the tunnel which collapses, Marshall plops beside her on the tunnel. Mr. Chad approaches them and says, “When you lie on the tunnel, it falls down. If you crawl through it, it will stay up.” He helps them up and says, “Nia, can you follow Marshall through the tunnel?” This suggestion helps the children re-engage in play.

Mr. Chad and Ms. Kendra will keep a close eye on the toddlers when they are through playing with the tunnel and help redirect them to an appropriate activity if necessary. The basketball hoop and balls will give them an active play choice until it is time for the children to go outdoors for playtime. There is not room for the tunnels to stay out all of the time, but they will be added to the environment frequently.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the movements of his or her body in order to move and to interact with the environment.

Cognitive Development:
The child will understand how things move and fit in space.

Social Development:
The child will have an awareness of his or her relationship to others in a group.
Cochise, 26 months, is playing in the manipulative area with Tyler, 22 months, and their family child care teacher, Ms. Tala. Each child is playing with different manipulatives laid out on the table. Tyler is putting shapes into a shape sorter and is having some difficulty with one of the shapes. Frustrated, he throws the shape block across the table, almost hitting Cochise.

“Tyler, don’t throw that. You almost hit Cochise,” says Ms. Tala returning the shape block to him. Tyler attempts to put the same shape into the sorter again. Still not being able to find the correct hole, he throws the shape again. Ms. Tala responds, “Tyler, throwing is not a choice.” Guiding Tyler from the table over into the open play space, Ms. Tala says, “Since you can’t stop throwing, you need to go play with something else.” Ms. Tala returns to the table to continue her play with Cochise.

Tyler looks around the room trying to decide what to play with next. He sees the balls stored in a basket and throws one across the room. Ms. Tala responds, “Tyler, don’t throw the ball in the house. You could break something. Why don’t you play with the train?” Tyler looks around and walks to the window.
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Infants and toddlers develop skills in their own way and at their own pace. It is for these reasons that care teachers need to continually observe each child and record the child’s interests, skills the child is practicing, and new skills that are emerging. Select materials that offer children the opportunity to make discoveries, that can be used in different ways, and that encourage children to participate and engage in problem solving. Select materials that support a child’s current and emerging skills and interests to enhance that child’s emotional, motor (muscle) and cognitive development. Your interaction during children’s play and learning contributes to their social and language/communication development as well.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can I help Tyler cope with his frustration?

Give It a Try
▲ Observe what is causing Tyler’s frustration.
▲ Name and validate Tyler’s emotions to help him learn to identify his feelings. In this example, Tyler appears to be upset that he cannot get the shape to fit in the shape sorter.
★ Acknowledge the child’s desire to throw objects and give him an appropriate choice for throwing things such as tossing bean bags in a bucket.
▲ Clearly and firmly state what a child can or cannot do. “Tyler, do not throw the block. Try to put the block in the hole that I showed you.”
▲ Offer assistance, but do not take over the task. Allow Tyler to make the discoveries and experience success.
➤ Choose developmentally appropriate materials. Select a shape sorter with fewer shapes for Tyler to practice his current skills. Once he has mastered it on several occasions, provide a more complex shape sorter. Add other materials to the environment, such as variety of puzzles and pegs/pegboard for various skill levels, so children can practice similar skills.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I help Tyler make appropriate choices for play?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that children benefit from learning when they choose experiences that are of interest to them and that meet their current and emerging skills.
➤ Provide materials toddlers are permitted to use. Since one of the functions of balls is to be thrown, but they are not allowed to be thrown in the home, store balls where children do not have access to them inside. Use the balls outside where toddlers are free to experiment with the different functions of a ball. Provide balls that are soft, so children who are accidently hit won’t be hurt.
▲ Help Tyler engage in play. Ask what he is interested in doing, help him get settled into play and provide ongoing interaction by talking with him, sitting near him or by joining him in his play.
Cochise, 26 months, is playing in the manipulative area with Tyler, 22 months, and their family child care teacher, Ms. Tala. Each child is playing with different manipulatives laid out on the table. Tyler is putting shapes into a shape sorter and is having some difficulty with one of the shapes. Frustrated, he throws the shape block across the table and onto the floor, almost hitting Cochise.

Ms. Tala, sitting across the table from Tyler, looks him in the eyes and calmly, firmly says, “Tyler, you are frustrated that the block won’t fit. But I won’t allow you to throw blocks. May I help you?” Tyler holds her gaze then looks at the shape sorter. He then selects a shape and attempts to fit it into the matching space. Ms. Tala points to another shape and suggests to Tyler that he try to fit the shape in it. He tries and it works. When the shape falls in, Tyler smiles and looks at Ms. Tala who responds, “The shapes match!” Tyler reaches for another shape and once again attempts to find the correct space as Ms. Tala suggests he try different shapes in the sorter until he finds the correct one. He smiles and says, “Me did it.” Ms. Tala replies, “Yes you did!”

Since Tyler has calmed down and feels good about his success Ms. Tala says, “Tyler, please pick up the shape on the floor. Let’s see if we can find where it goes.” He runs to pick up the thrown shape and eagerly looks for the correct space. Ms. Tala decides she will bring out the shape sorter with fewer shapes from storage since it better fits Tyler’s skill level. Cochise enjoys the more complex shape sorter so she will keep it accessible for him to use.
Biting...How to Stop It

Watch 🎥

Family child care teacher, Ms. Barbara, is helping Dane, 3 years old, set up the paint supplies at the art easel. Simone and Monica, both 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Ms. Barbara provides a variety of dramatic play accessories, including a baby doll, a baby bottle, a plush animal, a baby blanket, a couple of pots, plates, cups, and one large spoon. Ms. Barbara reminded Simone and Monica about taking turns with the materials when they first got out the dramatic play items.

Standing at the table, Simone is wrapping her baby doll in a blanket. Monica picks up the plush animal and the baby bottle. Simone, seeing Monica pick up the baby bottle, reaches over to take the bottle away from her. In response, Monica bites Simone on the back of her hand.

Ms. Barbara hears Simone’s scream and looks up from the art area. She rushes over and says, “We don’t bite! Monica, you need to be nice to your friends. If you can’t play together with the toys, I’ll have to put them away.” Ms. Barbara looks at Simone’s hand and kindly says, “It doesn’t look too bad. She didn’t break the skin. You will be OK.” Ms. Barbara takes the baby doll and bottle with her as she returns to the art area.

“I can’t protect myself from being bitten. I depend on you to keep me safe.”
Watch

Family child care teacher, Ms. Barbara, is helping Dane, 3 years old, set up the paint supplies at the art easel. Simone and Monica, both 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Ms. Barbara provides a variety of dramatic play accessories, including a baby doll, a baby bottle, a plush animal, a baby blanket, a couple of pots, plates, cups, and one large spoon. Ms. Barbara reminded Simone and Monica about taking turns with the materials when they first got out the dramatic play items.

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There are many reasons why toddlers bite. They may bite to get what they want or to keep what they have. They may also bite out of frustration. For example, they may not have the language skills necessary to communicate their wants and needs. The ability to control impulses is only beginning to develop during toddlerhood. An older toddler may occasionally be able to control impulses, but not consistently. Additionally, toddlers are in the process of learning how to engage in cooperative play. So instead of taking turns to resolve a conflict, they may bite. As toddlers’ motor skills are still developing, room arrangement can also impact their actions, including biting. For example, they may have trouble navigating through learning areas or through crowded or cluttered pathways. Observing and understanding why a toddler is biting will assist you in developing a plan and taking action to reduce biting incidents.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
◆ = Environment & Materials  ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How can I reduce biting incidents?
• How can I help Monica and Simone learn to play together with less conflict?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that young children are beginning to develop the ability to control their impulses and to self-regulate their behavior.
★ Consider each child’s temperament. Children react differently to similar situations based on their temperament.
★ Keep in mind that older toddlers are just beginning to learn to take turns, but may not be able to wait for their turn consistently.
△ Acknowledge that it is the care teacher’s responsibility to keep all children safe.
◆ Provide duplicates of popular toys to reduce conflicts over play materials. Observe when children’s interests change and rotate and change the types and quantity of play materials as needed.
★ Recognize that talking with toddlers about taking turns isn’t enough. Stay close by to supervise and facilitate interactions between Simone and Monica.
◆ Create an environment that gives toddlers plenty of room to play and move about easily. Place play materials in learning areas throughout the environment to prevent crowding.
★ Recognize that toddlers usually focus on “me” and often seek instant gratification. They want what they want, when they want it.
△ Join in play with the children. It helps them learn how to play with each other.
△ Help children solve problems by encouraging them to figure out solutions together. Accept and help them try out their ideas.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What are the most effective ways to respond to this situation?

Give It a Try
△ Comfort Simone, the injured child, immediately and affirm her reactions.
△ Wash the bitten area, even if the skin is not broken, and follow recommended first-aid procedures.
△ Talk with Monica after attending to Simone’s emotional and physical needs. Talk briefly and calmly about what she did, describing the impact the bite had on Simone. Use language that is appropriate for the age of the child. Return to comforting Simone after talking with Monica.
△ Allow toddlers to continue to play with toys instead of removing them from the children’s area. Suggest alternative items that may serve as substitutes such as plush animals for a baby doll or a cup for a bottle.
△ Complete the required paperwork for this type of situation. Maintain confidentiality as you share incident details with families. Provide resources related to biting to families.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Family child care teacher, Ms. Barbara, is helping Dane, 3 years, set up the paint supplies at the art easel. Simone and Monica, both 28 months, are playing in the dramatic play area. Ms. Barbara provides a variety of dramatic play accessories, including a baby doll, a baby bottle, a plush animal, a baby blanket, a couple of pots, plates, cups, and one large spoon. Ms. Barbara reminded Simone and Monica about taking turns with the materials when they first got out the dramatic play items. During play with the children, Ms. Barbara has been modeling and talking about taking turns. Knowing this is a new concept for older toddlers, she doesn’t expect them to consistently take turns.

While observing Simone and Monica, Ms. Barbara sees that both are interested in the baby bottle. Simone, who is holding the baby doll, says, “My bottle,” and reaches for the bottle in Monica’s hand. Ms. Barbara calmly calls to Simone, “Simone, Monica has the bottle. Why don’t you use a cup for your baby?” Ms. Barbara says this in order to create a pause in the toddlers’ interaction until she can reach them to facilitate their play.

Ms. Barbara sits very close to the girls. Simone does not choose the cup as Ms. Barbara suggested. Ms. Barbara restates Simone’s request, “You want the bottle. Tell Monica, ‘I want the bottle.’” Simone repeats her request.

Anticipating that Monica will say no, Ms. Barbara leans in thinking that Simone may try to take Monica’s bottle. Monica replies, “No!” Ms. Barbara says to Simone, “She told you ‘no,’ you can’t have the bottle.” Simone starts to cry and jump up and down. Ms. Barbara says, “That made you upset. I can help you find something else to use as a bottle. I see a plate, spoon and cup. Which one would you like to use?” Simone yells, “I want the bottle.”

Ms. Barbara knows that Simone is unlikely to accept her suggestion, so she changes her approach. Recognizing the toddlers’ interest in feeding babies, she redirects the focus of their play to see if they can cooperate instead of compete for the same item. She says to Simone, “I wonder if Monica would like to help you give your baby a bottle? You hold your baby, and Monica can hold her bottle. Let’s see if that will work.”

The toddlers look at each other as Ms. Barbara says, “ Monica, Simone’s baby is hungry. The baby wants a bottle.” Monica puts the bottle to the baby’s mouth. She smiles at Simone who smiles back. Ms. Barbara stays close, comments on the girls’ cooperation as they feed the baby together. Soon Monica loses interest and hands the bottle to Simone. Monica goes to the art easel to paint near Dane. Ms. Barbara accompanies Monica to help her get prepared to paint.

Ms. Barbara makes a mental note to get more dolls and bottles for the dramatic play area to support the children’s interest in feeding babies. Then, recognizing that she just barely prevented a biting incident, she decides to do some reading on toddler biting. She knows it is her responsibility to keep finding ways to prevent biting from occurring.
Toddler teacher, Mr. Glen, is reading to Celeste, 24 months, Declan, 20 months, and Cora, 30 months. The children like when Mr. Glen reads the books that they choose. They each also like to hold their selected book until Mr. Glen is ready for the next book.

Mr. Glen says to Celeste, “Your nose is running. Let’s get a tissue before we read the next book.” Celeste puts her book on the floor and walks toward the sink where the tissues are kept. Mr. Glen says to Declan and Cora, “We’ll be right back after I quickly help Celeste.” While Celeste is being cared for, Declan takes Celeste’s book and flips through the pages. After washing her hands, Celeste runs back to her book and notices Declan is looking at it. She grabs the book but Declan doesn’t let go. Celeste then bites him on the shoulder, causing Declan to cry and drop the book. Celeste quickly grabs the book and holds onto it tightly.

Mr. Glen hears the cry on his way back and asks, “What’s wrong?” Cora declares, “Celeste bit Declan.” Mr. Glen asks Celeste, “Did you bite Declan?” Celeste replies, “No.” Mr. Glen notices the swollen, red area and teeth marks on Declan’s shoulder. He responds, “Celeste, biting is not OK. You hurt your friend.” Mr. Glen kindly says to Declan, “Come on, let me take a look at your shoulder.” Declan, still crying, holds Mr. Glen’s hand and walks to the sink.

At pick-up time, Mr. Glen tells Celeste’s aunt that Celeste bit a child today and she needs to sign the incident report. Celeste’s aunt apologizes for Celeste’s behavior and then asks, “How did it happen, weren’t you watching her?” He answers, “I was, but I can’t always stop toddlers from biting.” Celeste’s aunt says, “But that is your job,” as she and Celeste walk out the door.

Next Mr. Glen talks to Declan’s dad. He looks at his son’s wound and says to Mr. Glen, “Isn’t there any way you can stop this? We don’t bring him here to get hurt.” Mr. Glen quietly responds, “I’m trying my best.”

"Treat my family with respect. Understand they are upset because they trusted you to take good care of me."
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Maintaining a trusting relationship with families is crucial to providing respectful care for their children. The way you talk with a family member about biting incidents can have a big effect on teacher-family relationships. Families want to trust that you are caring for their children at all times and that you are diligent in keeping them safe. They want you to have the knowledge and skills to know why biting occurs and to actively use strategies to prevent it. Family members also need assurance that you are empathetic and know how their child, in particular, likes to be comforted when in distress. It is essential that you respect them as the most important people in the child’s life, and acknowledge their concern. Taking responsibility for actions that occur is part of a care teacher’s role.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• Why has Celeste resorted to biting?
• What could I have done to reduce the chance of a biting incident?

Give It a Try
★ Understand that toddlers may engage in purposeful biting when attempting to get something or to change the outcome of a situation.
★ Keep in mind that biting is a typical part of development, though not all children bite.
★ Recognize that toddlers are just beginning to develop their ability to control their impulses and self-regulate their behavior.
★ Consider that Celeste may not have yet developed the skills needed to communicate needs in these types of situations.
▲ Be proactive. Anticipate that Celeste will want her specially chosen book back. To prevent the problem from occurring, ask Declan to give you the book to hold until Celeste returns to the group.
▲ Closely supervise toddlers who may have a tendency to engage in biting.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How should I respond to biting incidents that I didn’t observe?

Give It a Try
▲ Provide comfort and care for the child who was bitten.
▲ Acknowledge that it is not appropriate to expect children to report what happened and who was involved. Toddlers are not reliable witnesses.
▲ Do not assume to know who is responsible for incidents you do not see happen.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• What strategies can I use to talk with families about biting incidents?

Give It a Try
▲ Share openly and honestly with families how the child got injured. Maintain confidentiality.
▲ Take responsibility. It is the care teacher’s job to keep children safe from harm.
▲ Call family members after the incident occurs to inform them about it. This will give family members time to process the information before picking up their child.
▲ Avoid threatening families with suspension over typical developmental behaviors such as biting.
▲ Explain to families what you will do to reduce the chance of this happening again.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Toddler teacher, Mr. Glen, is reading to Celeste, 24 months, Declan, 20 months, and Cora, 30 months. The children like Mr. Glen to read books that each of them chooses. They also like to hold their books until Mr. Glen is ready for the next book.

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Mr. Glen reaches out to comfort Declan who is crying. He says, “That hurt, Declan. I am sorry that Celeste hurt you.” Mr. Glen cares for Declan’s wound and patiently comforts him. Mr. Glen firmly says to Celeste, “I will not allow you to bite Declan. Biting hurts.” Mr. Glen returns his attention to Declan until Declan is ready to reengage in play.

Mr. Glen completes incident reports to share with both families. For Celeste’s family, he writes in the report that Celeste hurt another child, explains how he responded to the incident, what he is going to do to prevent future biting incidents, and how he will help Celeste learn new skills to use in similar situations. For Declan’s family, he writes similar information along with a commitment to be vigilant about protecting Declan from future biting incidents. Then, Mr. Glen calls each family to let them know ahead of time the information in the incident reports.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will demonstrate interest in book reading, story telling and singing and will eventually understand the meaning of basic symbols.

Social Development:
The child will engage with other children.

Emotional Development:
The child will express feelings through facial expressions, gestures and sounds.
The toddlers in Mr. Cody’s and Ms. Natasha’s classroom just came inside from the playground. Mr. Cody tells all of the children to sit on the carpet in the center of the room for group time. Samara, 21 months, sits near a toy shelf instead and starts playing with a wooden peg stacking set. Mr. Cody calls to Samara saying, “Samara, it is time to put that away. Come sit with us, we are going to have group time.” Samara doesn’t respond to Mr. Cody and keeps playing with her toy.

Mr. Cody approaches Samara and gently takes the toy from her and puts it on the shelf. He holds her hand saying, “It is group time.” Samara starts crying and walks with Mr. Cody to the carpet. Mr. Cody starts group time by asking the children to stand up and stretch their arms to the ceiling; then bend to the right and left. When Samara doesn’t participate, Mr. Cody kindly says, “Samara, stand up and stretch.” Samara shakes her head no and continues to cry. Mr. Cody decides not to upset Samara more and lets her stay seated. When they are done stretching, Mr. Cody begins reading *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* by Dr. Seuss.

Rihanna, 27 months, quickly loses interest. She begins to wiggle and fidget, accidently kicking her neighbor in the back. Mr. Cody stops reading and tells Rihanna, “Stop kicking your friend and sit still please.” Rihanna stops kicking, but not interested in the story, she continues to look around the room.

In the meantime, Samara has gotten a book off of the shelf next to her. Mr. Cody asks his co-teacher, Ms. Natasha, to sit with Samara and help her put her book away while he finishes group time. Mr. Cody is finally able to finish reading the book, though two more children have become distracted by the other children’s behavior, and by the stopping and starting of group time activities. Mr. Cody ends group time early by singing a song.
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*more about... group time*

Young children are curious learners and little scientists at work. They are eager to have hands-on experiences with a variety of interesting materials to manipulate and mouth. Their focus is on doing things they choose to do, when they choose to do them, and on having responsive care teachers to interact and celebrate their discoveries with. This is how young children are wired to learn. Teacher-directed group times (circle times) are not developmentally appropriate for young children and they should not be expected to participate in preschool activities. Young children have not yet developed the necessary skills to participate in group time such as sitting still and turn taking. Most importantly, young children are active learners who learn by doing. Children rely on you to provide appropriate materials, safe spaces, positive interaction and responsive care teaching to further their development. By doing these things, you will be preparing them for the learning that lies ahead.
Ask Yourself
- Why won’t the toddlers sit still and participate in group time?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that young children gradually develop the ability to participate in teacher-led activities. Keep in mind that toddlers are not able to and it is inappropriate to expect them to participate in preschool experiences such as group time.
★ Consider that toddlers are usually interested in doing things they choose to do and are learning while they do them.
★ Understand that young children learn best through unstructured play, adult and peer interactions, and child-directed experiences.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
- How can I ensure that children have rich learning experiences?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that learning is most beneficial to toddlers when they are free to make choices and explore their interests.
★ Assess how play and learning experiences and materials support child development, current and emerging skills and how they encourage children to explore and make discoveries.
▲ Create various opportunities for children to pursue their interests, allowing ample time for them to make discoveries throughout the day. By using a peg stacking set, Samara learns about spatial relations and grouping and categorizing. Supply Samara with other types of peg stacking sets to extend her learning.
▲ Provide learning choices such as play with art materials, sensory experiences, active play, and outdoor play throughout the day. Be available to interact with children in multiple learning areas.
▲ Allow children to come and go from experiences as they choose.
▲ Avoid requiring children to follow external, adult-directed experiences. Respect children’s choices and follow their lead and interests.
The toddlers in Mr. Cody's and Ms. Natasha’s classroom just came inside from the playground. After washing their hands, the children have free play. Mr. Cody set out, on a table, four trays of sand (prepared before the children arrived this morning) and accessories such as large wooden craft sticks, small toy insects/animals/cars, sea shells, small shovels, and bowls/cups. Ms. Natasha, before going outside for play, covered another table in drawing paper and laid out an assortment of crayons. She also displayed a few “new” books on top of a toy shelf by setting the books up to help catch the toddlers’ attention. These “new” books are books that are occasionally rotated into use for two weeks at a time.

Knowing that toddlers learn best when engaged in experiences they choose themselves, and that toddlers have short and varying attention spans, the children are free to come and go to different experiences as they wish. The teachers ensure that there are a variety of materials throughout the room to engage children in a variety of experiences, explorations and discoveries.

Mr. Cody sits with the children experimenting with sand play. He closely supervises them due to the higher risk of injury and sanitary issues. He positions himself at the table so he can observe children at play throughout the room. Ms. Natasha supervises and interacts with the children at the drawing table and those engaged in other play experiences around the room.

Samara, 21 months, chooses to play with the wooden peg stacking set. After a few minutes, she notices Mr. Cody and the other children at the sand trays. Rushing over, she squeezes herself into a space to play, but all of the sand trays are occupied. Mr. Cody says, “Samara, all of the sand trays are being used. You can watch and wait for a turn or I’ll help you find something else to do.” Samara says, “Play sand.” Mr. Cody replies, “Sand table is full. Do you want to draw with Ms. Natasha?” pointing at the art table. Samara says, “No!” Mr. Cody says, “Do you want to get a new book on the shelf for us to look at?” Mr. Cody points to the new books. Samara hurries to get a book and brings it back to Mr. Cody who looks at it with her while interacting with the children at the sand table.

Rihanna, 27 months, is a very active child. She chooses to draw standing up instead of sitting down. Ms. Natasha sees Rihanna looking around the room after a couple minutes of drawing. Ms. Natasha re-engages with Rihanna and says, “You drew with a black crayon.” Rihanna looks at the drawing and crayon and says, “Now color with green,” as she draws with a yellow crayon. Ms. Natasha replies, “You drew a squiggly yellow line.” Rihanna answers, “Yes, with yellow.”

Rihanna draws a few more squiggles before playing with the sand trays, which Samara is now engaged with.
Why Won’t They...Stay on Their Cots at Nap Time?

Watch 🎬

It is nap time for family child care teacher Ms. Rosaline’s toddlers. Bringing the children in from outdoor play, she leads them to the restroom to toilet and washes their hands before nap. Ava, 20 months, lies down on her cot with her favorite blanket and waits for Ms. Rosaline to cover her up. Hunter, 21 months, dashes to the toy shelves and looks around scouting out what he wants to do next.

Ms. Rosaline tells Hunter, “It is nap time not playtime.” She holds out her hand, which he takes and she escorts him to his cot. She covers him up, hands him his plush toy tiger and stroking his hair says, “Have a good nap.” Next, she covers up Ava who is already drifting off to sleep. When she turns, she notices Hunter is off of his cot. She leads him back to the cot, covers him up again and rubs his back to help him relax. Believing he is ready to sleep, she leaves his side to work on her lesson plans. In less than 5 minutes, Hunter is sitting up with the blanket over his head singing a song. Once again, Ms. Rosaline says, “Hunter you need to lie down.” She tucks him back in then sits on the floor next to him working on her lesson plans until he finally goes to sleep.

In an hour and a half, Ava awakes, goes to Ms. Rosaline and asks, “Snack?” Ms. Rosaline replies, “Hi, Ava. You’re awake. No, it isn’t snack time, it is still nap time. You need to go lie down.” She takes Ava back to her cot and covers her up. After a few minutes, Ava sits up and says, “I awake,” and gets up off of her cot. “Ava, it is still nap time, you have to stay on your cot. Here, you can have a book to look at,” says Ms. Rosaline leading Ava back to her cot again. Ms. Rosaline continues to encourage Ava to stay on her cot until nap time is over.

“Making sure I get to rest and play when I need to helps me grow and learn.”
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Cots and sleeping mats are to be used for rest and naps, not for other purposes. It doesn’t benefit them nor is it developmentally appropriate to expect toddlers to sit or lie and be quiet if they are awake and ready for play. Even though children may be allowed to have a book or a quiet toy while sitting on their cot, teachers must consider whether the activity is meeting the learning needs, interests and freedom of choice that facilitates children’s learning. Also, toddlers awake on cots disturb other toddlers who need to sleep and result in teachers having to give children more guidance and supervision. Inappropriate behavior can be prevented if children who are not sleepy are allowed to use an area of the room for quiet play in order to make the most of their learning opportunities.
**Take Another Look**

**Ask Yourself**

- What are effective ways to help children prepare for nap time?

**Give It a Try**

- Understand that nap time should be individualized to a child’s need for sleep.
- Recognize that any activity, whether a quiet type of play or an active type of experience like outdoor large motor play, is suitable before nap time transitions.
- Consider that transitional routines need to occur between learning experiences and when children lie down for nap.
- Establish predictable routines and transitions by carrying them out the same way each time so children can anticipate what will happen next.
- Implement transitional routines. Have toddlers lay out their bedding and security object (teddy bear, blanket), offer a quiet book to children who are interested, or play quiet, soothing music in a cozy area where children can rest before transitioning to their cots.
- Create a restful and safe environment. Dim lights. Stay where you can easily keep all children in sight. Reduce noise, provide sheets, pillows (if age appropriate), blankets, and a safe and comfortable mat or cot.

**Keep Watching**

**Ask Yourself**

- How can I meet the napping needs of each individual child?

**Give It a Try**

- Consider a child’s typical nap schedule, but also consider the child’s experience that day. Did Hunter go to bed late the night before? Did Hunter sleep in this morning? Did Ava wake earlier than usual? Is Ava showing signs/cues of sleepiness, such as yawning, rubbing her eyes, irritability?
- Provide quiet play choices for toddlers who are not showing signs of sleepiness.
- Offer comfort and help children relax by sitting with them, rubbing their back, stroking their hair, and softly singing a song. Each child has preferences on how they like to drift to sleep; match your actions to their preferences.

**Watch Some More**

**Ask Yourself**

- What should early risers do?

**Give It a Try**

- Understand that toddlers differ from one another in the amount of sleep they need.
- Permit toddlers to remain on their cots while they transition from sleep to an awake state until they are ready to engage in their environment.
- Allow toddlers to leave their cots when they are awake and ready.
- Offer quiet materials and experiences for children to do while other children sleep. Encourage children to look at books, draw, and use manipulatives, if they are interested.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Family child care teacher Ms. Rosaline’s toddlers are outside for active play after lunch, which is part of their typical routine. After 30 minutes, she notices Ava, 20 months, is rubbing her eyes, seated on the ride-on vehicle but not riding it. On the other hand, Hunter, 21 months, is zooming around the sidewalk with his ride-on vehicle.

Ms. Rosaline asks Ava, “Ava, are you tired? Do you want to sit on my lap?” Ava nods her head yes, sits on Ms. Rosaline’s lap while they watch Hunter make two laps on his vehicle. Ms. Rosaline says, “Hunter, in 2 minutes we are going inside.” She addresses Ava, “Let’s let Hunter make a few more trips up and down the sidewalk, then we will go in and get ready for nap.” After 2 minutes, Ms. Rosaline tells the toddlers, “When we go inside, Hunter, I would like you to wash your hands first then you can choose something quiet to play with. Then Ava, I will help you get ready for nap.”


Before reading the book, Ms. Rosaline asks Ava to get her blanket and plush kitty out of her cubby while Ms. Rosaline lays out Ava’s cot and checks on Hunter. Ava tosses her blanket on her cot and curls up in Ms. Rosaline’s lap with her plush kitty to read the book. Ms. Rosaline, noticing Ava becoming very relaxed, tells Ava after the story, “Ava, you look so sleepy; let’s get you comfy on your cot.” Ms. Rosaline covers Ava up, strokes her hair and wishes her sweet dreams.

Ms. Rosaline joins Hunter and asks, “May I play with you?” Hunter says, “Yes,” and hands her a train. Hunter says, “My train goes on track. Goes ‘choo-choo.’ Your train goes ‘choo-choo?’” Ms. Rosaline, driving her train, says very quietly, “Choo-choo.” While keeping an eye on Ava, she notices Hunter is showing signs of tiredness. “Hunter, you look like you are getting sleepy. Let’s drive the train to your cubby and get your blanket.” Hunter drives his train to his cubby, parks it to retrieve after nap, and takes his blanket and pillow to his cot. Ms. Rosaline covers him up, rubs his back and sings his favorite quiet time song, “Hush Little Baby.” She sings it repeatedly until she can tell he has relaxed.

While supervising the sleeping children, Ms. Rosaline works on her lesson plans.

In an hour and a half, Ava awakes, goes to Ms. Rosaline and asks, “Snack?” Ms. Rosaline replies, “Hi, Ava. You’re awake. What would you like to do before snack time with Hunter? You could draw or put together a puzzle.” Ms. Rosaline asks because she knows Ava is aware of the routine of snack time after nap and wants to know if Ava is hungry or following the routine. Ava replies, “Puzzle,” so she and Ms. Rosaline play with puzzles, and then play with lacing beads and magnet stackers. When Hunter wakes, Ava says she wants to eat with Hunter who shows interest in snack time.
Why Won’t They...Follow Directions?

Mr. Nathan and Ms. Deven care for a group of older toddlers. Since it is raining outside, the teachers are going to take the toddlers to the gym for active play. Concerned about safety and supervision issues, as well as believing that older toddlers should learn to follow directions, the teachers want the children to line up and move through the halls in an orderly manner.

Mr. Nathan stands at the door and says, “It’s time to go to the gym everyone. Come and line up.” Ms. Deven moves about the room helping children clean up and guides them to the door.

As three toddlers join the group at the door, he helps them into line. While he’s helping these children, other children move out of line. Jake, 26 months, wanders from the line to play with a truck. “Jake, come back here,” calls Mr. Nathan. Jake continues pushing the truck. Mr. Nathan takes his hand and walks him back to the door. By now, most of the children are milling around. Mr. Nathan can’t seem to keep them in a line and he is getting frustrated.

Once all the children are gathered at the door, Ms. Deven says, “Now listen; walk with one hand touching the wall while we walk to the gym.” Once they get into the hall, the teachers make sure all the toddlers have one hand on the wall. Ms. Deven leads the group down the hall with Mr. Nathan walking behind them. After taking just a few steps, Jake walks away from the line and toward the hall window. “Jake, come back,” says Mr. Nathan as he guides Jake back. While he’s helping Jake, two other children move away from the line, but are still walking with the group. Mr. Nathan moves them back in line.

In the meantime, Abigail, 31 months, is running ahead. “Abigail, keep your hand on the wall,” Ms. Deven tells her as she positions Abigail in line behind her. Abigail takes a few steps with her hand on the wall then leaves the line again and walks slightly in front of the group. Mr. Nathan calls to her, “Abigail, hand on the wall.” Ms. Deven returns Abigail to the line. The group reaches the gym, and the teachers are disappointed and frustrated that the children didn’t listen during the walk.

“I can sometimes begin to follow directions when you keep my abilities in mind.”
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Often, one of the most challenging behaviors that care teachers experience in young children is their emerging ability to control their impulses, also known as self-regulation. Developing impulse control is part of a child’s emotional developmental process and it continues well into their preschool years. Towards the end of the mobile infant stage, and into toddlerhood, children may be aware of a care teacher’s expectation, but they may not have the ability to control their actions based on these expectations. Also remember, young children may control their behavior in one instance then not in the next. This is typical infant and toddler behavior. With appropriate guidance and support from responsive care teachers, and with repetition, supervision and patience, young children will begin to learn simple strategies to help themselves regulate their behavior.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What are appropriate expectations concerning toddlers’ ability to follow directions?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that toddlers are developing the ability to follow simple one-step directions.
★ Understand that toddlers are starting to develop the ability to manage their behavior and impulse control. These skills develop with age and teacher guidance.
★ Consider that the attention spans of toddlers are developing and that their attention shifts quickly from one thing to another.
★ Realize that attention spans differ among individuals and increase as a child ages.
★ Set appropriate expectations. Waiting turns and maintaining order is difficult for toddlers. These skills develop as children grow and are supported by appropriate care teaching.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I help toddlers understand what I would like them to do?
• How can I transition children from play to an organized walk to the gym?

Give It a Try
▲ Tell children individually rather than announcing the upcoming transition to the whole group. For example: “Jake, in 2 minutes we are walking to the gym.”
▲ Keep comments brief and make eye contact with toddlers.
▲ Repeat directions.
▲ Prepare and complete teacher tasks before transitioning children.
▲ Avoid requiring children to line up. This is an inappropriate expectation for toddlers.
▲ Reduce the amount of time children spend waiting.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• How can I help toddlers begin to learn to follow simple directions?
• What are strategies I can use to walk us to the gym in a safe and appropriate way?

Give It a Try
▲ Show toddlers what you want them to do. Be a good role model.
▲ Offer opportunities for toddlers to learn to follow directions in an enjoyable way. For example, play Stop and Go, sing If You’re Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands, or other rhymes that have simple direction-like qualities. Toddlers may only partially follow a direction. That’s OK, for they are still learning.
◆ Walk children to the gym in their primary groups, one group at a time.
▲ Engage toddlers in conversation. This may help them stay near you as well as support language development.
▲ Use the walk as a learning opportunity. Discuss what they see and hear.
★ Allow children to walk in a natural grouping. This supports peer interaction and may reduce conflicts.
Mr. Nathan and Ms. Deven care for a group of older toddlers. Since it is raining outside, the teachers are going to take the toddlers to the gym for active play. Concerned about safety and supervision issues, the teachers walk the children to the gym in their primary groups since smaller groups of children are easier to manage. The teachers schedule the transition so Mr. Nathan’s group will be in the gym before Ms. Deven’s group begins their walk. That way, children aren’t tempted to run to the other group of children causing safety and supervision issues.

Mr. Nathan tells each child in his primary group that they will be walking to the gym in 2 minutes. When it is time to leave, Mr. Nathan says to Jake, 26 months, “Jake, it is time to go to the gym. Do you want to tell Dakota it is time to go?” Jake asks, “Take my truck?” Mr. Nathan replies, “Sure you can.” Jake hurries to Dakota with Mr. Nathan following.

Once Mr. Nathan gathers his primary group, he walks them into the hall. To keep them safe and their attention on moving to the gym, he breaks their walk into two parts. First they walk to the hall window. “What do we see outside?” Jake answers, “Bird.” Mr. Nathan replies, “I see the little brown bird too. What is the bird doing?” After more comments, Mr. Nathan says, “Let’s flap our arms like bird wings while we walk to the gym.” He and the toddlers flap their arms as they walk. The children walk clustered together in a small group. Mr. Nathan keeps an eye on each of them as they “fly” to the gym. When he engages the toddlers in conversation, they tend to stay near him. If a child isn’t interested in the “flying” activity, Mr. Nathan lets that child choose how to get safely to the gym, whether it is to just walk or move in another safe way.

In the meantime, Ms. Deven lets her primary group continue with the experiences they are engaged in. When it’s time, Ms. Deven gathers and transitions her primary group in the same manner as Mr. Nathan. Knowing Abigail, 31 months, usually runs ahead during the walk, Ms. Deven reminds her, “Abigail, walk in the hall.” Once in the hall, Abigail starts to run ahead. Ms. Deven calls to her calmly and firmly, “Abigail, stop. I want to walk with you. Come carry the toy bag.” Abigail replies, “I’m going to gym.” Ms. Deven replies, “We are too. Wait for us.” Ms. Deven holds out the toy bag which Abigail comes back and gets.

Emotional Development:
The child will manage his or her behavior

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize herself or himself as a person with an identity, wants, needs, interests, likes and dislikes.
Care teacher Mr. Brennan is sitting with two toddlers playing at the sand table with small shovels, pails, a sand wheel and a sifter. Caroline, 34 months, joins her peers at the sand table with a dinosaur in her hand. Caroline sets her dinosaur in the sand and shovels sand on top of it. Mr. Brennan says nicely, “Caroline, the dinosaur doesn’t go in the sand. Take it out, please.” Caroline responds as she continues to shovel sand onto the dinosaur, “My dinosaur covered in sand.” “But the dinosaur doesn’t go here. It goes in the block area. Now it has to be washed,” says Mr. Brennan as he pulls the dinosaur out of the sand and puts it into the soiled bin of toys. Caroline cries, “My dinosaur, give it back.” “I’m sorry Caroline, it is dirty. Scoop sand into the bucket instead,” answers Mr. Brennan.

Caroline says, “No, I want the dinosaur.” Mr. Brennan kindly responds, “There are dinosaurs in the block area. You’ll need to play over there if you want to play with one.” Caroline hangs her head and walks away from the sand table. She settles into play in the block area choosing another dinosaur and making it stomp on the blocks.

As Caroline looks around the room, she notices Gabe, 31 months, and Christopher, 22 months, playing with the child-size kitchen set. She hurries to dramatic play area. Caroline sits the dinosaur in the toy kitchen sink and pretends to wash it. Mr. Brennan, seeing her calls, “Caroline, dinosaurs don’t go in the kitchen. Play with the food like Gabe and Christopher.” With a disappointed look on her face, she walks away.

“I learn from playing with materials in all sorts of different ways.”
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Young children are naturally curious. They learn best when allowed freedom to safely act on their curiosity. Exploring and experimenting with a variety of objects in different ways and settings is one way to feed a child’s curiosity. Children need the opportunity to make discoveries on their own, to see what works and how things work. Following their own curiosity informs children’s thinking and shapes their learning and future development – even as adults. Advancements in science, technology, medicine, and education are dependent on persons following their curiosity and experimenting with materials in new and different ways. Encouraging curiosity is encouraging learning and discovery.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- Why do children like to use materials in other learning areas?
- How should I respond to Caroline’s use of materials?

Give It a Try
★ Acknowledge that children learn and find pleasure from experiences they create.
▷ Recognize that materials have multiple uses and each experience the child creates with the materials is important to support learning.
★ Keep in mind that children are using problem solving skills and learning about cause and effect, spatial relations, grouping and categorizing, and imitation when playing with different materials in a variety of settings.
★ Be aware that children may spend more time focusing on things they find interesting, which in turn may increase their ability to participate and persist in a task.
★ Encourage children’s interests, discoveries and creativity.
★ Join in children’s play. Talk about their ideas and ask questions.
▷ Offer a variety of materials that Caroline can use in play and learning opportunities in different areas of the room or setting.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- How do I set limits on what materials can be used in specific learning areas?

Give It a Try
▷ Set appropriate boundaries based on safety, health and what it takes to keep materials well maintained. Allow children to use plastic, vinyl and wood toy animals in sand and water play since they can be easily cleaned and sanitized. However, cloth dolls and plush animals may be damaged in sand and water play.
★ Have only a few rules on how and where materials can be used. Having too many rules stifles a child’s natural curiosity, which is the key to learning and development.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Care teacher Mr. Brennan is sitting with two toddlers playing at the sand table. In two containers sitting at each end of the sand table are: a variety of toy vehicles, animals, people, nature objects, such as shells and pinecones, different-size containers, including small boxes and lids, and spoons/scoops as well as typical sand toys such as rakes, small shovels, pails, a sand wheel and sifter. All of the materials are an appropriate size for children to use in the sand table. Larger toys, such as bigger dump trucks and sand buckets, are used in the outdoor sandbox.

Caroline, 34 months, joins her peers at the sand table with a dinosaur in her hand. Caroline sets her dinosaur in the sand and shovels sand on top of it. Caroline says with confidence, “My dinosaur covered in sand.” Mr. Brennan replies, “You scooped a big mound of sand on your brown dinosaur. I can only see its head now.” Caroline takes a metal measuring cup full of sand and dumps it on the dinosaur’s head. She looks at Mr. Brennan and giggles, “His head is gone.” Mr. Brennan smiles and chuckles back, “You made the dinosaur disappear.”

Caroline makes a roaring dinosaur sound while she pulls the dinosaur from beneath the sand. The dinosaur stomps through the sand making footprints. “Caroline, look at the dinosaur’s footprints,” says Mr. Brennan. She looks at the prints then pushes down harder on the dinosaur as it stomps making deeper prints, stopping occasionally to look at the tracks. “Dinosaur makes big steps,” says Caroline. Mr. Brennan replies as he points to the big steps Caroline is referring to, “Those footprints are deep.” She stomps the dinosaur through the sand making heavy and light footprint impressions until the dinosaur reaches the side of the sand table. She sets the dinosaur out of the sand table and chooses a small wood box with a lid and a measuring spoon. She proceeds to fill the box with sand, experimenting with different amounts of sand to discover if the lid fits or doesn’t.

Once Caroline is finished with sand play, Mr. Brennan says, “Caroline, the dinosaur needs to be washed after being in the sand table. Please put it in the dirty toy bin and I’ll wash it. You can choose another dinosaur for the block area if you want one.”

Language & Communication Development:
The child will participate in interactions with language that follow the expected practices of the child’s family and community.

Cognitive Development:
The child will understand how things move and fit in space.
Ms. Alana and Ms. Sally work in a toddler class with eight toddlers ages 20 months to 36 months. Many of the children have recently started to toilet train. Lately, it feels like their day is consumed with routines such as helping children toilet, letting them re-dress themselves after toileting, and serving and cleaning up at snack and lunch. The care teachers feel like there is so little time to prepare the toddlers for preschool when all their time is spent in routines and transitions.

The other day Mr. Ichiro, Micah’s dad, asked Ms. Sally when they were going to start teaching the children their colors, letters, and counting. He wants to be sure Micah is prepared for preschool. Understanding Mr. Ichiro’s concerns, they wonder when they will build these new activities into their busy day.

Ms. Sally and Ms. Alana have noticed that some of the two- and three-year-olds like to say, “I’m two!” or “I’m three!” and decide to add a counting activity to respond to the parent’s request. The teachers gather the children together, giving each toddler objects to count. Micah, 24 months, gets three toy farm animals, Silas, 35 months, gets four toy cars and Jeremiah, 33 months, gets five blocks. The teachers count each object out loud, pointing to each one but the children are more interested in playing with the toys. By this time, Ms. Alana realizes Jeremiah should try and use the toilet and has him leave the counting activity. “Jeremiah, let’s hurry so we don’t miss counting,” says Ms. Alana. Ms. Sally tries to get their attention and attempts to repeat the activity three more times. But Micah and Silas have lost interest and Ms. Sally realizes it is time for the next activity. Before she forgets, Ms. Sally writes a note to Mr. Ichiro letting him know they practiced counting.
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Being a toddler care teacher is about supporting toddler development; not about preparing toddlers to be preschoolers. The knowledge and thinking skill that children build during the first three years of life prepare them to continue to learn during the preschool years and become ready for school. So instead of thinking, “There is too much to do to get ready for preschool,” think of it as, “Toddlers are scientists at work,” and lay the foundation for future learning by supporting them in opportunities to explore, participate in their care, and share meaningful communication with others.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• What are the most important things I can do to prepare toddlers for preschool?
• How should I address parent concerns about preparing children for preschool?

Give It a Try

★ Acknowledge that a child’s emotional and social development, beginning from infancy, is the base upon which future learning occurs.
★ Consider that self-help skills such as dressing, toileting and feeding are foundational skills for preschool age children.
★ Acknowledge that toddlers’ ability to develop self-competence readies them for new challenges.
★ Recognize that learning to relate to others is a developing skill that supports peer play and interactions and is important for preschool.
▲ Respectfully acknowledge family concerns; they want the best for their child.
★ Share with the family the teaching philosophy that supporting a child’s current development and emerging skills is the best way to prepare her for the next developmental stage.
▲ Partner with families to identify their children’s emerging interests and skills.
▲ Share photographs of their children playing and write a caption to explain how this experience supports children’s development and learning.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• How can I incorporate learning opportunities into my day?
• How do I communicate the child’s daily experiences to his family?

Give It a Try

★ Recognize that toddlers learn through routines and transitions by completing a series of steps and problem solving.
▲ Talk to the child during routines/transitions. Describe what is happening, ask simple questions, and comment on what they say to build vocabulary.
▲ Respond to children’s interests. For example, when a child discovers a spider, informally talk about where spiders live, its color/size. Add books, pictures, and songs to the environment related to the children’s interests.
◆ Allow activities to unfold. Provide uninterrupted time when children are engaged in meaningful play. Routines and child-initiated play/learning are equally important.
★ Recognize that structured group time is not an appropriate method to engage toddlers in learning.
◆ Write notes to parents that include meaningful experiences the child had during routine/play. Explain how these experiences support child development.
▲ Create a photographic display of children engaged in routine/play identifying their emerging skills.
▲ Include an article about preschool readiness in the family newsletter; highlight particular skills that are being supported in your classroom.
Ms. Alana and Ms. Sally work in a toddler class with eight toddlers ages 20 months to 36 months. Much of their time is spent on caregiving routines such as meals/snacks, washing hands, toileting, dressing and transitioning between play/learning and routines. Though these tasks take up a significant part of their day, they understand that these skills help toddlers actively participate more and more in self-care and gain self-competence. They are also emerging foundational skills for preschool age children.

Upon arrival, Mr. Ichiro settles his daughter, Micah, 24 months, into play then asks Ms. Sally, “We want Micah to be ready for preschool, so when will you start to teach her colors, letters, and counting?” Ms. Sally replies, “Good question. Micah is right on track, learning what she needs to as a toddler that will prepare her for preschool. For instance, Micah is learning early reading and writing skills. She always has books to look at and talk about; we read to her and she “reads” to us. She also loves to draw. Last week she “drew” her dog Buddy and told me he chases birds. She also enjoys lacing the big beads. We count and talk about the colors and sizes of the beads. Would you like to pick up a copy of the posted lesson plan tonight when you pick up Micah?” Mr. Ichiro replies he would and appreciates the information. Knowing she needs to keep this conversation brief so she can continue caring for are at home, so she can include this information in her planning.

Recognizing that structured group time is not an appropriate method of learning for toddlers, Ms. Sally and Ms. Alana provide a variety of opportunities and experiences with ample time for exploration and interaction. The teachers observed several toddlers are excited about recent and upcoming birthdays and often say, “I’m two!” or, “I’m three!” So this morning Ms. Sally sets out play dough, craft sticks and other play dough accessories, along with birthday materials such as hats, decorative paper plates, and a pretend cake. Silas, 35 months, pretends the play dough is a cake and the craft sticks are candles, and “blows them out.” Ms. Sally sings, “Happy Birthday to You,” and others join in. She asks Silas, “How old will you be?” and they count the “candles.” Some toddlers want the song sung to them, so Ms. Sally and some of the toddlers sing the song to their friends. Ms. Sally takes pictures for the parent board.

While Ms. Sally and some of the toddlers are “celebrating” birthdays, Ms. Alana helps Jeremiah, 33 months, toilet. During toileting transition, Ms. Alana says to Jeremiah, “In 3 minutes I am going to ask you to try to go the bathroom,” as she counts to three on each finger. In 3 minutes she says to Jeremiah, “It is time to go to the bathroom. Do you want to jump there?” Jeremiah shouts, “Yes!” and begins jumping. Ms. Alana and Jeremiah count each jump. Ms. Alana knows toileting involves toddlers following directions, completing a series of steps, and solving problems. So she gives Jeremiah plenty of time to undress, talking him through the steps and encouraging him to participate in his care as much as possible.

At the end of the day, Ms. Sally has a copy of the lesson plan for Mr. Ichiro and a brief, detailed note about Micah’s experiences. She asks Mr. Ichiro about Micah’s interests at home. For tomorrow, she photocopies an article about toddler development and preschool readiness to send home with the parents.
Getting Ready for Preschool...Can’t Play Anymore

The older toddlers in Mr. Steve and Ms. Judy’s room will be transitioning into the preschool room in a few months. The teachers decide to change their curriculum from play-based learning and activities to a more structured learning environment for preschool readiness activities.

First, they include literacy activities to help children learn to read and write the first letter of their name. Eight children gather at the table, each receiving a crayon and lined paper with the child’s name written on the first row. Ms. Judy asks them not to draw on the page, they are going to write instead, but as soon as Francesca, 29 months, and Josh, 30 months, get their crayons, they start drawing. Mr. Steve and Ms. Judy move quickly around the table guiding the toddlers’ hands in tracing the first letter of their name so all of the children get practice at writing. The teachers remind them to write between the lines. By now, most of the children are scribbling marks on their paper. Jillian, 32 months, is making marks that resemble circles. When the marks resemble a letter, the teachers comment and encourage the child to keep writing.

By now, after just 5 minutes into the literacy activity, the toddlers have lost interest. Ms. Judy and Mr. Steve try to re-engage them by showing them how to draw simple shapes, a pre-math skill. Simon, 28 months, says, “All done,” as he drops his crayon and leaves the activity. Other children soon leave the activity too.
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Did you know that the development of play crosses over all of a child's developmental domains which include physical health, motor (muscles), emotional, social, cognitive (thinking) and language development? Did you know that there are many types of play behavior and that the benefits of play are well researched and documented? Research shows play is how infants, mobile infants and toddlers learn. Play prepares toddlers for preschool. Your role as a care teacher is an essential element in providing and supporting play experiences through responsive interactions and creating an interesting and appropriately challenging environment. Studying the types and benefits of play can greatly enhance a teacher's knowledge and applying that knowledge can positively influence the early experiences of toddlers that will last a lifetime.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
○ = Environment & Materials  ♦ = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• How does play-based learning support preschool readiness?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that structured group time is not a developmentally appropriate method to engage toddlers in learning. Toddlers learn best through play and routines in an interesting and appropriately challenging environment.
★ Consider that during play toddlers develop cognitive (thinking) skills, including early literacy, social skills, communication skills, and problem solving – all preschool readiness skills.
★ Allow play experiences to unfold naturally providing uninterrupted time for meaningful play.
★ Recognize that learning is most beneficial when toddlers are free to make choices and explore their interests.
★ Talk with children during play to expand vocabulary and support social rules of conversation. Talk in teacher led activities tends to be more “direction giving” which lacks richness.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I support early literacy in play?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that early writing for toddlers involves using small muscle skills and learning to manipulate writing tools (paper, markers, crayons, pencils, and paintbrushes).
★ Provide access to a variety of appropriate books. Have engaging interactions while looking at, talking about, and reading books.
▸ Create areas for children to practice scribbling and making marks.
▸ Provide access to early literacy materials throughout the day for toddlers to use when they are interested.
★ Celebrate the process instead of the end-writing product. This helps build self-esteem and will encourage them to keep on writing.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• How can I support pre-math skills with toddlers?
• Why won’t the children pay attention during group time?

Give It a Try
▸ Provide materials that vary in difficulty for differing abilities and emerging skills. Include shape sorters, number books and puzzles, and opportunities for sorting, grouping, and categorizing.
★ Interact with toddlers during play and routines. For example, talk about the shapes of objects; a plate is a circle, a block is square.
★ Recognize that young children gradually develop the ability to stay focused on an activity; it is a skill that does not need to be taught.
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

The older toddlers in Mr. Steve and Ms. Judy’s room will be transitioning into the preschool room in a few months. The teachers have been integrating a variety of meaningful literacy and pre-math activities into their classroom.

The teachers use the environment to create several opportunities for name recognition. Mr. Steve creates labels that have the child’s name and photograph. The photographs help children make the connection between themselves and their name in print. The labels are placed on the children’s cubbies, cots, and on the family photo board, which is placed down low for the children to see.

Mr. Steve and Ms. Judy rearrange their room to allow for individuals or small groups of toddlers to play in the art, dramatic play, and manipulative area. Each table has space for three to four children to sit or stand. They set up an easel that has room for two children to create at one time. Cushions and a mat have been added to the book area so children can relax while they explore books. Used books were purchased at the local thrift store and from the community library sale. Writing materials, art materials, and manipulatives, like shape sorters, puzzles, and counting pegboards are rotated into play based on the child’s interest and skill level of the children in the class.

Ms. Judy observes Simon, 28 months, and Francesca, 29 months, painting on the easel for 15 minutes, and other toddlers anxious to paint. So the next day, Ms. Judy hangs a sheet of butcher block drawing paper on the wall so more toddlers can paint. She also lays paper on the floor to catch any paint spills and drips.

In addition to painting, the teachers notice that toddlers flock to the table when they get out the crayons and paper. They decide to make one of the tables a writing center. They start out with paper and crayons and continue to add different materials throughout the next few weeks.

Josh, 30 months, and Jillian, 32 months, are drawing marks on their paper that resemble circles. Mr. Steve sits with them and says, “Wow, those are five big circles. How did you make them?” Josh smiles and says, “Like this. Zoom, zoom, zoom.” Mr. Steve says, “Zoom, zoom, zoom around your crayon goes!” Soon Jillian joins in and the children have created new pictures. Mr. Steve says, “These are perfect for our wall. Can we hang one?” Jillian says, “No! I want mine.” Mr. Steve smiles and says, “That’s fine. You can take it home. Josh, do you want to hang yours up or take it home?” Josh decides to hang his picture. Mr. Steve and Josh decide the best place to hang it and hang his photo and name card near his art.

Emotional Development:
The child will recognize herself or himself as a person with an identity, wants, needs, interests, likes and dislikes.

Cognitive Development:
The child will be able to remain focused on a task or object and to persist in the face of obstacles.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will demonstrate interest in writing and will develop fine motor abilities required to hold a writing tool and make marks on a surface.
Getting Ready for Preschool...Families Expect Me to Teach

Watch

Families in Ms. Melanie and Mr. Jack’s toddler classroom are asking when their children will start learning pre-academic skills for preschool. The teachers understand the families’ concerns: they want the best care and education for their child. But Mr. Jack and Ms. Melanie know toddlers learn best when they have experiences to practice current skills and have opportunities to explore emerging skills. Experiences intended to support toddlers’ learning should focus on their interests.

Knowing the children are learning while they are playing and their toddlers are right on track developmentally, Ms. Melanie and Mr. Jack decide not to change their care teaching strategies. So instead, they decide to let the parents know that their children are learning.

Mr. Jack makes a colorful banner that says, “We are learning while we play,” and hangs it across the play space. Ms. Melanie takes pictures of Tameka, 30 months, scooping and pouring sand and water during play, and of Darnell, 29 months, making marks on paper in the art area. She will hang the photos on the parent board to show the children are engaged, happy and learning.

Realizing the lesson plan isn’t posted near the parent entrance, they re-post it where parents sign their children in and out so the parents can see that the teachers are intentionally planning learning experiences. They hope these communication methods will ease the parents’ concerns.
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Families are a child’s first and most important teacher. They have entrusted the care and learning of their child to you, someone who will have a direct influence on their child’s health, safety and well-being, including preparing their child for success, whether it is for school success or in making friends. It is the responsibility of care teachers to understand how infants and toddlers develop, how experiences connect with and support development, and then to communicate this information to the family. Different types of communication work best for different family needs. Provide written, photo, and verbal documentation on a regular basis. Brief but meaningful communication tends to help busy families on the go.
Ask Yourself
• How should I address parent concerns about preparing children for preschool?

Give It a Try
▲ Respectfully acknowledge family concerns; they want the best for their child.
▲ Plan communication with families that builds a mutual understanding in ways that are sensitive to individual family needs and cultural and language differences.
★ Share with the family the teaching philosophy that supporting a child’s current development and emerging skills is the best way to prepare her for the next developmental stage.
▲ Listen carefully to what families say about their children and seek to understand their goals, priorities and preferences. Consider families’ input as you plan curriculum.
▲ Include an article about preschool readiness in the family newsletter; highlight particular skills that are being supported in your classroom.

Keep Watching
Ask Yourself
• How do I communicate to the family that their child’s daily experiences are preparing them for preschool?

Give It a Try
▲ Share a quick story with Tameka's dad when he picks her up about Tameka’s experience with dumping/filling and how she made a “river” in the sand. Relate the experience to learning science skills.
▲ Give families an individual photo of their child engaged in playing/learning. On the back of the photo include a quote the child said during the experience. Briefly describe how this experience supports preschool readiness.
■ Make the learning process visual. Create a “Today we…” message board and a photo/caption display.
▲ Write brief notes to parents several times a week that include meaningful experiences the child had during routine/play. Explain how these experiences support child development.
★ Provide each family with a copy of a developmental stages, milestones and behaviors resource document such as South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines.
▲ Conduct family/teacher conferences twice a year to review goals and development. Share the child’s portfolio with the family.

Watch Some More
Ask Yourself
• What should the curriculum plan include to help parents understand how it benefits their children?

Give It a Try
★ Highlight the child’s interests, current/emerging skills and experiences that support developmental skills.
★ Align skills to specific infant/toddler developmental domains and behaviors.
★ Write a brief narrative on the curriculum plan highlighting a developmental skill and how it aligns to preschool readiness.
▲ Provide families with a copy of the curriculum plans.
Families in Ms. Melanie and Mr. Jack’s toddler classroom are asking when their children will start learning pre-academic skills for preschool. The teachers understand the families’ concerns; the families want the best care and education for their children.

Mr. Jack and Ms. Melanie realize they need to be more intentional about sharing their teaching philosophy with the families and have decided to add that to their family newsletter. The teachers update their daily (or weekly) curriculum plan to show alignment to the Infant & Toddler Guidelines and provide a copy to each parent as well as post it in the arrival/departure area of the room.

To visually connect play to learning, Ms. Melanie and Mr. Jack add some new methods for briefly communicating to families about ways children learn.

The teachers hang a dry erase board by the entrance to their room that reads “Today we...” to highlight an experience that occurred that day. At pick-up time, they encourage the families to check it out. Today Ms. Melanie wrote, “Today we read Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?” and the toddlers finished the sentence ‘I see a red bird looking at me.’ They are building an early interest in reading, which will help motivate them to learn to read when they are older!! Check out the book at the local library!”

For individual parent communication, Mr. Jack snapped a photo of Tameka, 30 months, playing at the water and sand table. He jotted down her comment on a sticky note to add to her photo, “The water goes down the sand. I stop it,” she said as she put the shovel in front of the moving water. He also writes that she explored science skills of cause and effect while creating a “river” of water in the sand. Mr. Jack will give this to her family tomorrow. Using such documentation to communicate offers a possible keepsake for her family.

Darnell, 29 months, is an avid “writer” and loves making marks on paper and telling a story. Ms. Melanie, not wanting to intrude on Darnell’s picture and story, later writes on the back of his paper what he told her his story was about. Ms. Melanie also included wording from South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Guidelines that an interest in writing develops small muscle skills which are needed to hold a pencil and is a component of early literacy.

Families have responded well to the white board communication as well as to the individual stories the teachers have been sharing. Ms. Melanie and Mr. Jack feel like they are becoming more effective at addressing families’ interest in getting their children prepared for preschool while maintaining an age appropriate classroom.

Cognitive Development:
The child will be able to mirror, repeat and practice the actions modeled by another.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will demonstrate interest in book reading, story telling and singing and will eventually understand the meaning of basic symbols.

Cognitive Development:
The child will use the self, objects or others to attain a goal.

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Mr. Elijah is a care teacher for a group of toddlers. For the majority of the day, the toddlers have access to all of the learning areas and materials in their room. Mr. Elijah finds the end of the day hectic with families arriving to pick up their children. Toys are strewn about and he still needs to attend to the closing duties of cleaning and sanitizing. So toward the end of the day, Mr. Elijah closes off learning areas and puts away some materials to help maintain order.

Ollie, 26 months, is building a block structure using many different blocks and it has taken him quite a bit of time. Hank, 20 months, is stringing beads. This is the first time he has been able to string so many beads consecutively. Sierra, 24 months, is laying out scarves on the floor so each scarf lines up to the next with corners touching. Mr. Elijah has cleared a space to accommodate her work.

When it is about time to go outside, Mr. Elijah tells each child to clean up their toys. Hank yells, “Mine!” when Mr. Elijah attempts to pick up the lacing beads. While lifting the string and sliding the beads off Mr. Elijah says, “You have to put them away now. Watch them slide off of the string.” Hank repeats, “My beads,” and shoves the bead bin. Although Hank is upset, Mr. Elijah ignores his outburst and re-shelves the beads. Ollie asks Mr. Elijah if he can leave his blocks out. Mr. Elijah nicely replies, “No, put the blocks back. You can build it again later.” Ollie hangs his head and disappointedly disassembles his structure. Sierra stamps her feet and frantically tries to put the scarves back in order when Mr. Elijah starts putting them away.

When the toddler group returns indoors, Mr. Elijah closes off the block and vehicle area, the dramatic play and music area, and one of the manipulatives areas. Ollie runs eagerly to the block area and says quickly at the closed off area asking, “Can I build?” Mr. Elijah replies, “Not now, it is closed. Your grandpa will be coming soon. You can build tomorrow.” Ollie hangs his head and walks away. Sierra, looking for the scarves, asks, “Where are my scarves?” Mr. Elijah gives her a reply similar to the one given to Ollie. Hank runs around the room, not finding anything interesting to do. Ollie looks absently out the window and Sierra lays books on the floor in a manner similar to what she did with the scarves.

“I actively continue to learn when given the opportunity to explore my ideas.”
Watch

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more about... opportunities for learning

Ongoing access to materials, equipment, and experiences that interest children significantly contributes to their ability to engage in complex play. Children follow their drive to explore materials and discover what they can make happen. They also combine materials to make new discoveries and extend their learning. If materials are often not accessible to children for long periods of time, the children’s opportunities for learning are greatly diminished.
Ask Yourself
• How can I maintain some order at the end of the day?

Give It a Try
◆ Prepare children’s belongings and paperwork that is to be sent home ahead of time.
◆ Allow children to play until it’s time to begin the transition routine to go home. This keeps children engaged in learning and reduces inappropriate behavior, conflict, and boredom.
◆ Begin transition routines several minutes before the child’s family is scheduled to arrive. Some children will take longer to do the routine, so individualize the time needed. Keep the routine the same every day.
◆ Include clean-up as part of the transition routine. Have appropriate expectations for the children’s abilities to participate. Help children with the clean-up process.
◆ Communicate with families. Ask them to notify you if they will not be picking up their child at the typical time, so the child will be ready. Preparing ahead of time will make for a smoother transition for everyone.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• What are Ollie, Hank, and Sierra learning from their play experiences?
• Why do some children have such a strong reaction when their play is interrupted?

Give It a Try
★ Recognize that children learn holistically. Ollie is learning about balance, coordination, space, and patience, as well as how to use his small muscle skills to set up the blocks and his large muscle skills to move around his structure.
★ Appreciate the trial and error process Hank has used to string several beads and the problem solving skills he has engaged in.
★ Acknowledge Sierra’s concentration and persistence in laying out her scarves in a way that interests her.
★ Consider that play is important and enjoyable for children. When play is interrupted, their learning is interrupted.
★ Keep in mind that children’s temperaments play a role in their actions and reactions.
★ Note that Ollie’s feelings about having to end his block play are just as important as Hank’s and Sierra’s even though Ollie has a quieter reaction.
★ Recognize that children communicate through their behaviors. Care teachers need to read those behavioral cues and respond accordingly.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• Why don’t the children engage in other activities with the same interest and enthusiasm as earlier?
• How does having access to materials throughout the day benefit children?

Give It a Try
★ Consider that children tend to engage in play longer when they choose the materials and experiences that interest them.
▲ Offer materials throughout the day so children can freely explore and fulfill their curiosity and so you can support peak learning moments.
The toddlers in Mr. Elijah’s toddler room are busy at play. Ollie, 26 months, is building a block structure using many different blocks and it has taken him quite a bit of time. Hank, 20 months, is stringing beads. This is the first time he has been able to string so many beads consecutively. Sierra, 24 months, is laying out scarves on the floor so each scarf lines up to the next with corners touching. Mr. Elijah has cleared a space to accommodate her work.

Mr. Elijah knows the toddlers in his care well – their temperaments, likes, and dislikes. He knows which children may or may not be able to resume play once interrupted. Knowing it is beneficial for children to continue their play, he gives them as much time as possible and prepares them for transitions. When it is about time to go outside, he checks in with each child. He says to Ollie, “That is a very long building. Do you want to build some more when you come back in from outside?” Ollie replies, “Yes, I make it bigger.” Mr. Elijah also lets Hank and Sierra know about the upcoming outdoor time. When it is time to go out Hank says, “No go out,” and holds tightly to his lacing beads. Mr. Elijah kindly replies, “Lay it on the table and it’ll be here when you come back.”

When they come back indoors, Ollie and Sierra go directly back to the blocks and scarves and continue their play. Mr. Elijah observes Hank looking around for something to do and says, “Hank, your beads are on the table,” as he points to the table. Hank replies, “I all done.” Mr. Elijah kindly remarks, “The beads need to go back in the bin, come help me.” Mr. Elijah starts to put the beads in the bin then Hank says, “I do it.” Hank slides the beads off one at a time and hands each one to Mr. Elijah who drops it into the bin. Mr. Elijah knows that Hank may not always help clean up, but he is learning to participate in the clean-up process. Mr. Elijah knows he must be patient with the toddlers and set appropriate expectations.

He realizes that Sierra’s aunt will be arriving soon. He tells Sierra that she will need to pick up the scarves because this area needs to be cleaned. He reassures her that she can play with the scarves tomorrow. Mr. Elijah knows that Sierra likes to put the scarves away in a certain manner, so he is sure to give her plenty of notice. Her belongings are ready, and her paperwork is on the family sign-in table.

Soon after Sierra’s aunt arrives, Ollie’s grandpa shows up earlier than usual. Mr. Elijah greets Ollie’s grandpa and asks Ollie if he’d like to show his grandpa his building. Ollie eagerly takes his grandpa’s hand, shows him his building, and tells him about it. Ollie is very proud of his structure. Mr. Elijah knows that taking apart the structure and putting away the pieces will upset Ollie and delay Ollie’s grandpa. Knowing Ollie and seeing his enthusiasm Mr. Elijah asks, “Do you want to leave this up and work on it tomorrow?” Ollie happily says, “I build it bigger tomorrow.” Mr. Elijah understands the benefit of enhancing Ollie’s learning by allowing him to expand on his ideas.
I Know I Should...Go Outside More Often

It is difficult for care teacher Ms. Irene to get her toddlers ready to go outside when the weather is chilly. There are so many steps to making sure that all of the children are dressed appropriately and that they don’t get upset while waiting for other children to get ready.

Coming back inside is just about as hard. Jackets lay on the floor, mismatched gloves are strewn around the room, and hats are often misplaced or lost. Several of Ms. Irene’s families have complained about lost items only to have them show up in their cubbies after the families have replaced the items. As a result, Ms. Irene doesn’t take the children outside very often, even though they are scheduled to go outside twice a day.

Today is sunny but cold. Chio, 20 months, is looking out the window saying, “Go outside, go outside,” while patting the window. Twenty-three-month-old Josiah, hearing Chio, pulls his coat off the hook and attempts to put it on. Ms. Irene would rather stay in and put on some music to dance to. It saves time and is less hectic. She also doesn’t like to be out in the cold weather. She says to the toddlers, “No, we aren’t going outside. We are going to stay in and dance.” Josiah, still trying to get his coat on, asks, “I go out?” Ms. Irene repeats, “No Josiah, we are going to stay inside and dance. Here, I’ll hang your coat back up.” Josiah responds, “No, go out.” “Not today, it is too cold,” replies Ms. Irene. She puts on some music and encourages the toddlers to dance.

The toddlers aren’t interested in dancing. A couple of them roam the room looking for something to do. Chio continues to look out the window and Josiah stacks blocks and knocks them over. But it isn’t long before Ms. Irene notices some toddlers climbing on the shelves and running around.

“When I play outside, I have opportunities to learn new things I can’t experience inside.”
It is difficult for care teacher Ms. Irene to get her toddlers ready to go outside when the weather is chilly. There are so many steps to making sure that all of the children are dressed appropriately and that they don’t get upset while waiting for other children to get ready.

Coming back inside is just about as hard. Jackets lay on the floor, mismatched gloves are strewn around the room, and hats are often misplaced or lost. Several of Ms. Irene’s families have complained about lost items only to have them show up in their cubbies after the families have replaced the items. As a result, Ms. Irene doesn’t take the children outside very often, even though they are scheduled to go outside twice a day.

Today is sunny but cold. Chio, 20 months, is looking out the window saying, “Go outside, go outside,” while patting the window. Twenty-three-month-old Josiah, hearing Chio, pulls his coat off the hook and attempts to put it on. Ms. Irene would rather stay in and put on some music to dance to. It saves time and is less hectic. She also doesn’t like to be out in the cold weather. She says to the toddlers, “No, we aren’t going outside. We are going to stay in and dance.” Josiah, still trying to get his coat on, asks, “I go out?” Ms. Irene repeats, “No Josiah, we are going to stay inside and dance. Here, I’ll hang your coat back up.” Josiah responds, “No, go out.” “Not today, it is too cold,” replies Ms. Irene. She puts on some music and encourages the toddlers to dance.

The toddlers aren’t interested in dancing. A couple of them roam the room looking for something to do. Chio continues to look out the window and Josiah stacks blocks and knocks them over. But it isn’t long before Ms. Irene notices some toddlers climbing on the shelves and running around.

Frequent opportunities for outdoor play enable children to learn about themselves, what they can do, what they want to do, and what they feel, see, hear and smell. Outdoor time also provides them with the opportunity to experience cause and effect relationships in nature, for example, by seeing and hearing wind blowing the leaves off of a tree or the sun warming their face. Children’s experiences with nature in the outside environment give teachers many opportunities to build language skills and begins to lay the foundation for science concepts by helping children to group and categorize elements around them. It is important to remember that taking children on buggy rides should not be used to replace outside playtime and restricting children’s movements outdoors by placing them in seats or other infant equipment does not provide the learning opportunities and experiences they need for healthy development.
**Take Another Look**

**Ask Yourself**
- How can I make the transitions of going outside and coming inside easier?

**Give It a Try**
- Organize a space for each child’s coat with a container for the child’s hat, gloves and other outside apparel.
- Support toddlers in putting on and taking off their outdoor clothing. This builds an important self-help skill.
- Assist toddlers with learning to put away their coats, hat and gloves after coming inside.
- Create a “exit and enter” routine for going outside and coming inside. Use the same routine each time. Routines give children a sense of security in knowing what will happen next and may prevent problems that can arise during transitions.
- Use a song or rhyme to signal children that a routine is about to occur. With toddlers, use the same song until everyone understands what it means.
- Reduce wait time. Put your coat on first and have materials ready to go outside before dressing children.
- Divide children into small groups, taking each group out at separate times.
- Arrange for an extra care teacher to assist in transitions.

**Keep Watching**

**Ask Yourself**
- How does weather play a role in deciding about going outside?
- What are the benefits of outdoor play?

**Give It a Try**
- Consider it is best practice to take children outside unless there is active rain or snow or a public health advisory.
- Make sure to give children enough time outside for large motor play.
- Adjust how long to stay outside depending on weather conditions.
- Dress children and yourself appropriately for the weather.
- Recognize that outdoor play provides an environment for children to explore and make discoveries that are different from those provided by an indoor environment.
- Join in play with the children during their time outside to extend and encourage their learning and exploration.
- Be aware that exposure to outdoor environments supports children’s physical health. Fresh air and sunlight are important to a child’s overall health, even when a child is ill. Of course, always follow the doctor’s advice.
- Provide material and equipment to support large muscle development.
Today is sunny but cold. Care teacher Ms. Irene is aware that it is about time to take the children outside for play. Chio, 20 months, is already looking out the window saying, “Go outside, go outside,” while patting the window. Twenty-three-month-old Josiah, hearing Chio, pulls his coat off the coat hook and attempts to put it on. Ms. Irene has noticed that some of her toddlers are initiating self-help skills, whether it is bringing their coat to her for help or attempting to put it on themselves.

Ms. Irene says, “Yes, Chio we are going outside. Let’s get your coat.” Chio finds his coat but has difficulty getting it off of the coat hook. Ms. Irene helps him get it down making a mental note that his hook may need lowered so he is able to do this by himself. She assists Josiah with getting his coat, hat and gloves on. She hands him a ball and asks, “Will you please hold this for me? We are going to take it outside.” Josiah says, “I take ball,” and walks to look out the window.

In the meantime, Ms. Irene readies the other toddlers. She lets them walk about and play until all the toddlers are ready to go outside. She has found this routine reduces children becoming upset. Just as important, play and learning are extended and not wasted on waiting.

Once outside, Josiah runs to the fence to watch the construction vehicles across the street. The equipment has been there all week, and many of the toddlers are fascinated watching what the vehicles do and hearing the different sounds they make. Ms. Irene says, “What are the trucks doing today?” Josiah replies, “Bulldozer is gone.” She responds, “You’re right, I don’t see it.” Josiah asks, “Where did it go?” “It went back to the garage. It was done moving dirt,” she answers. Josiah looks at Ms. Irene and takes a moment to think about what she said. Looking back at the construction site he says, “Dump truck has dirt.” “It has a big load of dirt. It is spilling out,” says Ms. Irene. She realizes she should add books about construction vehicles to the book area and see if there are extra toy vehicles that could be rotated into play to extend the children’s learning.

Chio, in the meantime, has been throwing a ball, running after it, and then throwing it again. He is having some trouble picking up the ball with his gloves on. But he has figured out to trap the ball against his chest with his arms and hands as he bends over to pick it up.

Ms. Irene calls to the toddlers that it is time to go in. Once inside, some of the older toddlers know to go to their cubby and put their hat and gloves in their box and some have learned to unzip their coats. Ms. Irene helps the children that need assistance and allows those who want to do it themselves plenty of time to do as much as they are able. She remains available to help them whenever needed.
I Know I Should...Offer Creative Arts

Ms. Bobbie and Mr. Tim are care teachers for a group of toddlers. They know they should offer art more often, but it is hectic and messy and the teachers feel like it ends up being a negative experience because the toddlers don’t listen.

The teachers wait for all of the toddlers to come to the table for an art activity. Some children are reluctant and want to continue playing on their own. When all of the toddlers are finally at the art table, Ms. Bobbie places the art materials on the table. Several toddlers eagerly reach for the supplies. “Wait! I will pass them out after I tell you what we are making,” Ms. Bobbie exclaims. “We are going to make pumpkins like this,” explains Ms. Bobbie as she shows them the orange construction paper pumpkin with a green construction paper stem.

Mr. Tim gives everyone a brown crayon and a paper pumpkin that he cut out earlier. “You can color your pumpkins brown.” Sydney, 32 months, says, “I want pink,” which is her favorite color. Mr. Tim replies, “We are using fall colors today. Pink isn’t a fall color.” “I want pink please,” she repeats. “You can use pink next time. Your mommy will like your brown and orange pumpkin,” answers Mr. Tim. Sydney sits for a moment, looking disappointed, then begins to use the crayon without much effort.

After a few minutes Ms. Bobbie says, “OK, put your crayon in the basket,” even though some children are still making marks. She encourages them to hurry as the other children are restless. “Now we are going to put the stems on. Mr. Tim and I will put on the glue and help you paste on the stems.” Each child is to wait their turn. The teachers try to hurry, but the toddlers want to touch and smear the glue, which makes a mess. Bennett and Alan, both 29 months, start waving their other toddlers join in on the fun. Ms. Bobbie exclaims, “Stop! Put those down please.” The teachers decide to put the pumpkin stems on for the toddlers to speed up the process.

Ms. Bobbie starts to draw black lines on each child’s pumpkin to resemble the ridges on a real pumpkin. When Ms. Bobbie begins to draw on Sydney’s pumpkin, Sydney cries, “No, my pumpkin.” Ms. Bobbie replies, “It will look more like a pumpkin with the lines.” Sydney angrily wipes her pumpkin onto the floor and cries.
Ms. Bobbie and Mr. Tim are care teachers for a group of toddlers. They know they should offer art more often, but it is hectic and messy and the teachers feel like it ends up being a negative experience because the toddlers don’t listen.

The teachers wait for all of the toddlers to come to the table for an art activity. Some children are reluctant and want to continue playing on their own. When all of the toddlers are finally at the art table, Ms. Bobbie places the art materials on the table. Several toddlers eagerly reach for the supplies. “Wait! I will pass them out after I tell you what we are making,” Ms. Bobbie exclaims. “We are going to make pumpkins like this,” explains Ms. Bobbie as she shows them the orange construction paper pumpkin with a green construction paper stem.

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Ms. Bobbie starts to draw black lines on each child’s pumpkin to resemble the ridges on a real pumpkin. When Ms. Bobbie begins to draw on Sydney’s pumpkin, Sydney cries, “No, my pumpkin.” Ms. Bobbie replies, “It will look more like a pumpkin with the lines.” Sydney angrily swipes her pumpkin onto the floor and cries.

Creative arts for young children are about exploring and manipulating art materials, rather than about creating pieces of art. Allowing children to make discoveries with appropriate art materials provides them with more opportunities to learn from the experience than when the art activity is predesigned and scripted. Just as we offer them opportunities to play with puzzles, books and blocks throughout the day, children can benefit from repeated opportunities to engage in art experiences. Consider that the use of art materials requires sufficient eye-hand coordination and self-control. Very young children who are only beginning to develop self-control may put materials into their mouths. Art may not be appropriate for them. Frequent observation of children using materials helps to determine their abilities and the types of art materials they can safely handle. Examples of appropriate art materials include non-toxic crayons, non-toxic finger paint, large non-toxic chalk, chalkboard, and a variety of paper. For older toddlers, try offering water color markers, a variety of painting tools, easy to use blunt scissors, and play dough with simple tools.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• What are appropriate guidelines for toddler art experiences?

Give It a Try

★ Keep in mind potential safety hazards when choosing art materials. Safety always takes priority. Follow safety warnings, age recommendations and directions on art materials.

★ Determine if art experiences are of interest to each child and appropriate for the child’s age and abilities.

★ Recognize that art is about the process, what children learn, and how it supports their development. It is not about the finished product.

★ Consider that art is not meant to represent themes such as the seasons or holidays. Art is an opportunity for a child to be free to create.

★★ Remember that art is not the use of coloring sheets, pre-printed pictures or papers that are cut out to resemble an item that the children are to draw/paint on.

★★ Offer daily art experiences and let children come and go as they desire. Do not require children to participate.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• What are appropriate expectations concerning a toddler’s art ability?

• What strategies help toddlers benefit from art experiences?

Give It a Try

★ Remember that toddlers manipulate objects in different ways in order to learn about them. This includes art materials.

★ Keep in mind that there should be little, if any, wait time. Toddlers will develop the ability to wait throughout the preschool years.

★ Recognize that toddlers have not fully developed the ability to manage their behavior and impulse control. These skills develop with age and teacher guidance.

★★ Offer art to three to four children at a time, so you can give individualized attention to each child and manage the situation more easily.

★★ Provide a variety of age appropriate materials. Allow toddlers to choose crayons, paints, types of paper or other drawing surfaces. Having opportunities to make choices expands their learning and allows for creativity.

★★ Ready the environment. Have materials set out and ready for use when toddlers arrive at the table.

★★ Adapt materials to support each child’s ability. For example, tape paper to the table if a child is having difficulty holding it.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself

• Why does Sydney become upset?

Give It a Try

★★ Respect a child’s art. Children are proud of what they produce. Do not cut or manipulate to create something else. The child’s art is the finished product.

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Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Ms. Bobbie and Mr. Tim are care teachers for a group of toddlers. They have art materials accessible daily for the toddlers to use whenever they want. The teachers choose materials that are safe, appropriate, and that require less supervision. On a shelf beside the child-size table and chairs is a container of crayons, which are in good condition. The teachers have limited how many crayons they put out. There are enough for several children to choose from a variety of colors, but not too many. This means they always have crayons in good condition to rotate into use. There is a wide selection of different types, sizes and colors of paper for children to choose too.

The teachers also offer other daily art opportunities. Today, the toddlers can choose to paint. Ms. Bobbie tapes three large pieces of white paper to the table, one for each child. She decided to tape the paper because a few days ago when they painted some toddlers had difficulty managing the paper while painting. She places three containers of different paint colors at each child’s place along with three different painting utensils.

Bennett, 29 months, notices Ms. Bobbie setting out the supplies and hurries to the table. Mr. Tim sees Alan, 29 months, wandering so he asks Alan if he would like to paint. Alan replies, “I like to paint,” and joins Bennett. Sydney, 32 months, overhears Mr. Tim talking to Alan and asks, “Can I paint?” Mr. Tim replies, “Yes, Ms. Bobbie is at the table.” Sydney rushes to the table.

The toddlers get their smocks on and immediately start to paint. Sydney looks at the paint colors and says, “I want pink,” her favorite color. Ms. Bobbie replies, “Let me see if we have any.” She does and pours it into a container. “We do have pink. May I trade you for one of your other colors so the table isn’t so crowded?” Sydney looks into the containers and hands the brown paint to Ms. Bobbie who says, “Thank you,” as she takes it. Sydney uses the large paint brush. Taking her time and concentrating, she covers the entire surface of her paper with pink. Sydney says, “I’m all done,” while looking at Ms. Bobbie proudly. Ms. Bobbie returns Sydney’s smile and says, “Are you going to give that to your mommy? Or should we hang it in our room?” Sydney thinks then replies, “Hang it there,” as she points to an area where other art is displayed. Ms. Bobbie replies, “When it dries, you can hang it up.”

Bennett is slowly dabbing a sponge into the paint then dabs, rolls, and wipes the paper with the sponge, looking at the different patterns. He holds up the sponge to Ms. Bobbie and says, “What’s this?” She replies, “That is a sponge.” He repeats, “A sponge. I paint with sponge.”

Alan quickly pushes his round paint brush deep into the paint and then uses it to make two blotches of blue. He starts to take off his smock and says, “I done.” Ms. Bobbie smilingly replies, “You paint quickly. Mr. Tim will help you wash your hands.”

Two other children who wanted to paint take the spots vacated by Sydney and Alan.

Language & Communication Development:
The child will participate in interactions with language that follow the expected practices of the child’s family and community.

Cognitive Development:
The child will make things happen and understand the causes of some events.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the use of his or her hands, fingers and sight in order to manipulate objects in the environment.
I Know I Should…Implement Primary Caregiving

Watch

Russ, 30 months, is fascinated playing with the magnetic maze. He is figuring out the best way to hold the magnetic stylus to move the butterfly magnet through the garden maze board. He is very persistent in his attempts to move the magnet. Mr. Perry and Ms. Rhea, toddler care teachers, notice Russ is busy and content so they attend to other children and tasks.

Russ occasionally looks at his teachers while working with the maze. The teachers don’t see Russ’s cues. He eventually moves the magnetic butterfly from one end of the maze to the other. He looks up and says excitedly, “I did it,” and neither teacher hears him. He looks around and sees Mr. Perry looking out the window with Muriel. Russ goes to him and happily says, “I did it.” Mr. Perry responds, “What did you do?” Russ replies, “I moved the butterfly.” “You did? Well you did a good job. Why don’t you go tell Ms. Rhea?” says Mr. Perry. Russ hurries to Ms. Rhea and says, “I moved the butterfly!” Ms. Rhea replies, “What butterfly?” Russ points to the magnetic maze on the table and says, “That one.” Ms. Rhea responds, “Oh, the magnetic butterfly. That is great, Russ.” Russ waits, looking at Ms. Rhea as she continues playing with another child. He solemnly returns to the magnet board and attempts to move the butterfly magnet again. Mr. Perry and Ms. Rhea continue caring for the other children.

Later that day, Mr. Perry updates the children's daily reports and includes the activities the toddlers did that day. On all of the children's reports he lists that they had the opportunity to use the water table and they played outside. He tries to remember something specific each child did to include on the report. On Russ's report he writes that Russ played with the magnetic maze. Mr. Perry also jots down a few similar notes to add to the children's portfolios, which will be used in program planning.

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A primary care teacher is an early childhood professional with the education, training and experience to support the learning, development, and nurturance of children birth to 36 months of age. The primary care teacher has the principal responsibility for providing and coordinating the care (including safety, health, development, learning and emotional well-being) of specific or assigned infants and toddlers and for building a partnership with the children’s families. Primary caregiving is not exclusive caregiving and works best when infant care teachers support each other as a team.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself

• How does primary caregiving increase opportunities to collect detailed information during child observations?

Give It a Try

▲ Consider that observing fewer children at play and learning is simpler than observing a larger number of children and may make more detailed observations possible.

★ Learn about how primary caregiving allows you to become familiar with a child’s developmental abilities, emerging skills, likes/dislikes and temperament through close and frequent observation, which in turn helps you make decisions on individualized care teaching strategies.

◆ Understand that health and safety supervision is the responsibility of all teachers for all children throughout the day regardless of primary care groupings.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself

• How does primary caregiving support and enhance children’s development and learning?

• What are the teacher benefits to primary caregiving?

Give It a Try

▲ Focus on each child in your primary group to provide responsive, respectful, and reciprocal care. This type of care strengthens the child’s relationship with you and the child’s sense of emotional security.

★ Consider that building and maintaining a secure relationship with a consistent care teacher lays the foundation for a child’s future learning.

▲ Validate Russ’s accomplishment. Ask Russ to show you what he did and ask him to explain it if he wants. This builds his self-competence and develops his language skills.

★ Recognize that a secure attachment with a care teacher encourages a child to explore, to discover, and to learn, and supports the child’s ongoing identity development.

▲ Touch base with Russ during play and read his cues. Avoid interrupting his play if he is fully engaged in what he is doing. Look frequently to see if he is sending you cues.

◆ Realize that primary care teachers enjoy a special connection with their primary care group.

▲ Consider that primary caregiving allows a teacher to concentrate on caring for, playing with and supporting the learning of a few children as opposed to many children.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself

• How can primary caregiving be useful in documentation?

Give It a Try

★ Focus on each child in your small primary group, which for a child such as Russ allows you to document, in detail, examples of his problem solving skills, his use of small muscle skills, his attention and persistence, and his expression of pride in his accomplishment.

◆ Analyze the details of Russ’s experience and note how you can support these skills through program planning.

★ Share with Russ’s family what skills he displayed during his magnet play and how that play supports his development and learning.
Russ, 30 months, is fascinated playing with the magnetic maze. He is figuring out the best way to hold the magnetic stylus to move the butterfly magnet through the garden maze board. He is very persistent in his attempts to move the magnet. Mr. Perry and Ms. Rhea are the toddler’s care teachers. Mr. Perry is Russ’s primary care teacher. Mr. Perry, sitting near the window with another child, notices that Russ is busy working on the magnetic maze. He keeps visually checking in with Russ.

Russ looks at Mr. Perry, but Mr. Perry doesn’t notice Russ’s glance. A couple of minutes later, Mr. Perry observes Russ and Russ looks up and catches Mr. Perry’s eye. Russ smiles and resumes his work. Mr. Perry walks over to Russ and observes him manipulating the magnetic stylus. Russ grasps the stylus with his left hand with all of his fingers in a closed fist. Mr. Perry notices that Russ has learned a technique to move the butterfly magnet with longer strokes of the stylus, as opposed to short, jerky movements. Russ is using his right hand to hold the magnetic maze still so it doesn’t move when he touches it with the stylus. Mr. Perry takes a picture of Russ to display in the room and put in Russ’s portfolio. He’ll also give a copy to Russ’s family.

Russ says to Mr. Perry, “Watch me.” Mr. Perry sits and watches Russ. Russ says, “I moved it!” Mr. Perry replies, “You moved the stylus to move the butterfly. You moved it from the orange flower to the black bird,” he says as he points out the distance on the garden maze. Russ replies, “I move it to the red flower.” Russ goes back to work concentrating on his task.

Seeing Russ focusing on using the maze, Mr. Perry attends to Muriel who is looking out the window. In a few minutes Russ hurries to Mr. Perry and happily says, “I did it.” Mr. Perry responds, “What did you do?” Russ excitedly replies, “I moved the butterfly.” Mr. Perry asks with a smile, “Would you like to show me?” Russ excitedly says, “Yes. I get it.” He hurries, grabs the maze, and returns to Mr. Perry, who is sitting with Muriel still looking out the window. Mr. Perry says, “You moved the butterfly to the end of the garden! Do you want to show me how you make the butterfly move?” Russ squats down and moves the butterfly back through the maze.

Later that day, Mr. Perry updates the children’s daily reports. He writes on Russ’s report: Russ spent 15 minutes discovering how to manipulate the magnetic stylus to move the magnetic butterfly through the garden maze. He learned how to make long strokes with the stylus. Russ also used his right hand to hold the board steady so it wouldn’t move. Russ excitedly said, “I did it! I moved the butterfly.” Mr. Perry writes a quick note and adds it to Russ’s portfolio and planning folder, where he’ll later place the printed photograph he took of Russ. He’ll use this documentation to plan other play and learning opportunities that will support fine muscle skill development.
When Rowan, 19 months, gets hungry and has to wait to eat, she cries loudly and is difficult to comfort. She follows her primary care teacher, Ms. Helen, around and hangs on her pant leg. Ms. Helen gets frustrated because she is trying to take care of other children and get lunch ready.

Usually Rowan is hungry before the other toddlers. Her home schedule is different than the program’s meal schedule. Today, Ms. Helen decides to feed everyone a little earlier to prevent Rowan from getting so upset.

Ms. Helen starts washing the children’s hands for lunch. Rowan hurries to her seat after washing her hands. However, Naomi, 26 months, doesn’t want to eat lunch yet. When Ms. Helen calls her to come wash her hands and sit at the table, Naomi runs behind a shelf. Needing to get everyone seated, Ms. Helen picks her up even though she is resisting being carried and is crying. Ms. Helen talks to her calmly and gently washes her hands. She walks her to the table and helps her take a seat. Naomi remains upset.

Rowan begins eating immediately. Naomi pushes her plate away. Wyatt, 24 months, looks at his plate then at Ms. Helen and says, “Not hungry.” Ms. Helen replies, “We are eating lunch a little early today, go ahead and eat.” Wyatt rises to leave the table. Ms. Helen nicely says, “Wyatt, sit down please. It is lunchtime.” He responds, “No, not hungry.” Naomi cries, “I go play.” A couple of the other toddlers are nibbling at their lunch, but not eating with the same hunger as they do at their regular lunchtime. Ms. Helen decides to let Wyatt and Naomi go play since they are not eating and causing disruption at the table.

It doesn’t take Rowan long to finish eating and soon she shows signs of sleepiness and falls asleep at the table. Ms. Helen lets her sit there for a few minutes so the other toddlers can finish their lunch, and she can clean up. Ms. Helen wakes Rowan up and encourages her to go play. The teacher doesn’t want Rowan to take a nap now because then she will be awake when the other children are napping.
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As children progress through toddlerhood, their schedules often become similar to the schedules of other toddlers in the group. Many are hungry and sleepy at the same time, though there may be some variations. Even so, the routine care needs of younger toddlers – and even of older toddlers – differ from the routine needs of others. It is important for a child’s emotional development to meet his individual needs as they arise. This type of care establishes and builds trust between the child and you, and supports healthy attachment. Keep in mind that daily events at home, at the program, and illness and temperament may contribute to a child needing routine care met in a different way or at a different time than what you would typically expect.
Give It a Try Key

△ = Teacher Interaction  ★ = Child Development & Interest
☐ = Environment & Materials  ● = Caregiving Routine

Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
• What should I do when a child’s schedule is different from the schedule of most of the children in the group?

Give It a Try
◆ Practice responsive, respectful and reciprocal care teaching. Provide care to meet each child’s individual needs.
◆ Allow children to follow their own individual schedules. A child should not be in distress waiting for her needs to be met.
◆ Avoid making other children adapt to Rowan’s individual eating patterns.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
• How can I meet individual children’s needs?
• How do individualized routines benefit toddlers?

Give It a Try
★ Consider a child’s individual needs, temperament, personal schedule, likes and dislikes and how you can provide responsive care to the child.
△ Read children’s cues and listen to what they are saying.
◆ Prepare for busy times of the day. Assess what care will soon be needed and plan accordingly.
◆ Feed children individually or in small groups of two or three based on their individual schedules.
□ Offer a variety of appropriate materials and experiences to children whose behavior indicates they are not yet ready for routines such as snack, lunch or nap.
★ Acknowledge that routine care is a young child’s curriculum. It has an impact on a child’s learning, skill development and attachment to care teachers.
★ Use caregiving routines to get to know the toddlers as individuals. This approach to care provides children with a sense of security.
◆ Use individualized routines as a time to interact with children. This builds trust as well as language skills.

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
• How can I meet the napping needs of individual children?

Give It a Try
◆ Understand that toddlers differ from one another in the amount of sleep they need.
◆ Anticipate that Rowan will get sleepy right after eating.
◆ Accommodate her personal schedule by helping her transition as soon as she shows signs of getting tired.
□ Provide quiet play choices to toddlers who are not showing signs of sleepiness.

Put It All Together

South Carolina’s Infant & Toddler Field Guide • www.scpitc.org
Putting It All Together: Essential Practices in Action

Care teacher, Ms. Helen, notes it is almost time for Rowan, 19 months, to start showing signs of hunger. Most of the older toddlers are on the same feeding and napping schedule, but Rowan’s routine care needs occur at a different time than theirs.

Ms. Helen has learned to offer Rowan snack and lunch at the first sign of hunger. Otherwise, Rowan gets so hungry that she begins to cry and is difficult to comfort, which then makes it hard for her to eat.

Ms. Helen washes Rowan’s hands and invites her to sit down to eat. She sits beside her knowing children who are eating should always be closely supervised. Ms. Helen positions herself so she can see and interact with all of her toddlers. Ms. Helen asks, “Rowan, are your peaches good?” Rowan nods yes. “I like peaches too,” says Ms. Helen.

Wyatt, 24 months, approaches the table and asks, “I have cracker?” But Ms. Helen knows the children well and their signs of hunger. Wyatt ate a hearty snack and Ms. Helen believes he may be asking because Rowan is eating. She says, “Wyatt, lunch is very soon. Do you want to use the crayons and draw?” Wyatt replies, “I get crayons,” and hurries to the art shelf. When Wyatt returns, Ms. Helen says, “You need paper to draw on.” Wyatt returns to the art shelf for paper. He sits beside Ms. Helen scribbling while Rowan eats.

Rowan gives a big yawn, has stopped eating, and begins to play with her food. “It looks like you are getting tired. Let me wash your face and hands, then you can take your nap.” Once Rowan’s face and hands are washed, she isn’t sleepy enough to lie down in her crib. Ms. Helen says, “Rowan, you can rest in the cozy area with your blanket until you are ready to go to sleep.” Rowan sits on the mat and picks up a book to look at.

Ms. Helen starts preparing lunch for the other toddlers. She tells Naomi, 26 months, “It is lunchtime. I’ll be ready to wash your hands when I’m done with Wyatt’s.” Ms. Helen knows Naomi is typically not as eager to eat as everyone else, so she is usually the last one to get her hands washed.

While the toddlers are eating lunch, Rowan goes to Ms. Helen who is sitting at the table with the toddlers. Ms. Helen asks, “Do you want to sit on my lap while they eat?” Rowan climbs into Ms. Helen’s lap and relaxes in her arms while listening to the conversations around the table. After lunch, Rowan is tired enough to lie in her crib for nap.

Physical Health:
The child will be exposed to and assisted with frequent and proper handwashing.

Motor Development:
The child will coordinate the use of his or her hands, fingers and sight in order to manipulate objects in the environment.

Social Development:
The child will engage with other children.
I Know I Should...Serve Meals Family Style

Ms. Tara and Mr. Nolan are care teachers for eight toddlers, ages 24 months to 36 months. They and the program administrator have decided to start family style dining for lunch. Knowing it is best practice, the teachers are excited, but also cautious since it is something new for them.

At lunch today, Ms. Tara and Mr. Nolan’s primary groups of toddlers complete their handwashing routines as Mr. Casey, the program’s cook, brings the food cart to the classroom. Ms. Tara proceeds to set the tables with plates, plastic drinking glasses and utensils.

Meanwhile, Mr. Casey places serving bowls of food in the center of Ms. Tara’s table. Ethan, 28 months, stands up and grabs a handful of green beans from the serving bowl. Mr. Casey politely says, “Not yet, Ethan. Sit down.” Ethan sits back down dropping the green beans back into the serving bowl. Mr. Casey, sighing, removes the bowl of green beans commenting, “We’ll need a new bowl of beans now.”

Ms. Tara lets the children serve themselves peaches. She holds the bowl and guides their hands if help is needed. Serita, 25 months, decides to help herself to the noodles while waiting for the peaches. Taking a heaping spoonful, she plops it on her plate and beams with pride. Seeing Serita Ms. Tara says, “Serita, please wait for me. You took too much.” Ms. Tara is getting frustrated that this is taking much longer than expected. Knowing the children are hungry, she decides to serve the food herself. Mr. Nolan, having a similar situation at his table, follows Ms. Tara’s lead and also serves the children.

The teachers planned on sitting with the children while they ate, but they constantly have to serve food, pour milk, clean up spills and keep the children focused on eating. This experience of family style dining wasn’t as pleasurable or successful as the teachers had hoped.
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Did you know in an average week you serve approximately 15 meals and snacks per child? That’s about 780 meals and snacks per child per year. Implementing family style dining will make the most of those 780 encounters. This gives you 780 opportunities to provide nutritional food to help children grow and develop, to help them ward off illness, to model healthy eating to develop healthy habits, and to help children develop relationships and social and language skills to last a lifetime. Consider that people’s points of view and memories of mealtime and food-related experiences start in infancy and last a lifetime. As a care teacher, you have a wonderful opportunity to start children on the right path to developing positive experiences and healthy habits that will continue to grow and develop beyond your care.
Take Another Look

Ask Yourself
- What are the advantages of family style meals?
- How should I prepare to start family style dining?

Give It a Try
- Recognize that it creates the atmosphere of a family seated together around a meal, having a conversation.
- Consider that it develops self-help skills.
- Appreciate that it lends itself to casual, richer conversation and develops strong communication skills.
- Realize that it focuses on social skills and relationships, not only time for nourishment.
- Read a variety of resources on family style dining. Talk with infant and toddler consultants for ideas.
- Create a plan. Discuss expectations and implementation details with the administrator, cook and teachers a few weeks before starting a new routine.
- Slowly introduce children to the idea of family style dining. Include books in the cozy area showing families sitting together talking over meals. Talk to children at lunch time about how things will be done differently.

Keep Watching

Ask Yourself
- How does family style dining work?

Give It a Try
- Provide a peaceful, comfortable atmosphere with pleasant conversation and plenty of patience.
- Sit with toddlers and set an example by eating the same food they are served.
- Observe if a child is overly hungry or has another immediate need. Serve him one food so he may start eating. Allow him to serve himself other foods later in the meal.
- Converse with children about what they are eating. Describe taste, temperature, shape, and color; don’t make it a quiz. Talk about daily and home events.
- Encourage a child to try the food offered but honor her answer if she says “no.”

Watch Some More

Ask Yourself
- How can family style dining be effective and pleasurable?

Give It a Try
- Keep realistic expectations considering the difficulty of each task (ex. serving with a spoon is easier than pouring a beverage). Only ask a child to do what he is developmentally ready to do.
- Expect spills. Have materials for quick clean up close by and ready to use.
- Make family style meals routine by serving meals the same way every time.
- Give children time to adjust to the new routine.
- Approach dining as time to connect with toddlers emotionally and socially; you are helping them learn lifelong skills.
Ms. Tara and Mr. Nolan are care teachers for eight toddlers, ages 24 months to 36 months. They and the program administrator have decided to start family style dining for lunch. Knowing it is best practice, the teachers are excited, but also cautious since it is something new for them.

Ms. Tara, Mr. Nolan, the program’s cook Mr. Casey, and the program administrator met two weeks ago to plan to change meal and snack service to family style dining. They know it offers toddlers many benefits including encouraging independence, introducing them to new foods, and helping them learn to serve themselves and make choices. The staff are also aware that family style dining for lunch includes a lot of steps. They design a plan so they are ready.

The teachers agree that the children are ready for this transition. They have been eating snack family style at child-sized tables and chairs. They practiced pouring at the sensory table and played with a variety of dishes and utensils in the dramatic play area and outside in the sandbox. At lunch today, Ms. Tara’s and Mr. Nolan’s primary groups of toddlers complete their handwashing routines as Mr. Casey brings the food cart to the classroom. Ms. Tara proceeds to set her group’s table with plates, plastic drinking glasses and utensils. When she is done, Mr. Nolan sets his group’s table. They sit with their own primary group.

Ms. Tara serves noodles to her group so they don’t wait too long to eat; it keeps them occupied too. The other food will be self-served by the toddlers with Ms. Tara’s help or she will serve them if they are unable or do not want to. When she asks Ethan, age 28 months, if he wants peaches he replies, “No.” Ms. Tara accepts his response saying, “Alright, Ethan. Peaches are a healthy fruit. If you change your mind, you can have some.”

Ms. Tara also remarks to Ethan, “Ethan, that noodle must be slippery. It keeps sliding off of your spoon.” Ethan giggles, which causes his peers and Ms. Tara to giggle. Serita says, “Peaches are cold.” Ms. Tara replies, “They are cold. Mr. Casey keeps them in the refrigerator.” Ethan then asks, “Me have peaches?” “Yes Ethan, I’ll pass it to you,” replies Ms. Tara. She passes it to him while helping him hold the bowl so he can maneuver the spoon.

Serita knocks over her milk, which she and Ms. Tara wipe up. Because Ms. Tara knows spills will happen, she doesn’t let it frustrate her and doesn’t get upset with Serita. Toddlers have a lot to learn and skills to master. Ms. Tara pours her another glass and the conversation continues.

Ms. Tara knows that routines help children understand what will happen next. She implements snack and lunch in a predictable way every day.