SOCIAL STUDIES, ART, MUSIC, AND MOVEMENT



Vicki Tanck
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College



Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (NWTC)

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1: SOCIAL STUDIES, ART, MUSIC, AND MOVEMENT THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Introduction

Note

Throughout this text, you will see Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement referred to as **SSAMM**.

This chapter will develop your understanding of **Course Competency 1: Incorporate Social Studies, Art, Music, & Movement (SSAMM) into daily routines.**

Learning Objectives

This chapter will explore:

- the importance of integrating SSAMM into your day
- the relationship between schedules, routines, and transitions
- specific ideas to include SSAMM experiences into your routines
- incorporating SSAMM into your verbal and non-verbal interactions
- incorporating SSAMM into transition activities

1.1: The Importance of Integrating SSAMM Throughout the Day

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1.1: The Importance of Integrating SSAMM Throughout the Day



Note

Throughout this text, Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement will be abbreviated as **"SSAMM"**.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of integrating **SSAMM** experiences into your daily routines.

Introduction

Integrating Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) into daily preschool routines is crucial for fostering holistic development in young children. These curricular areas offer diverse opportunities for cognitive, physical, social-emotional, and language development, making learning engaging and fun. This document explores the significance of integrating SSAMM activities throughout the day and provides practical examples of how these activities can be seamlessly incorporated into daily schedules to support children's growth and prepare them for future academic success.

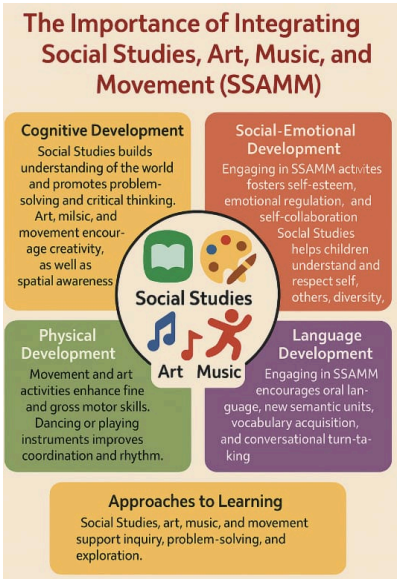


Figure 1.1.1: Integrating SSAMM is licensed under CC by 1.0

Supporting Holistic Development

Integrating Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) into daily routines is not just about adding variety to the preschool day; it is about enriching children's learning experiences in a way that supports their overall development. By engaging in SSAMM activities, children can explore and express themselves in multiple ways, fostering well-rounded growth that touches every aspect of their development. Let's delve into how SSAMM contributes to the holistic development of children across various domains.

Cognitive Development

Social Studies builds understanding of the world and promotes problem-solving and critical thinking. Art, music, and movement encourage creativity, memory, and spatial awareness.

Physical Development

Movement and art activities enhance fine and gross motor skills. Dancing or playing instruments improves coordination and rhythm.

Social-Emotional Development

Engaging in SSAMM activities fosters self-expression, emotional regulation, and collaboration. Social Studies activities help children understand and respect diversity, empathy, and community roles.

Language Development

Social studies activities, such as discussions about family and community or role-playing, promote narrative skills, vocabulary expansion, and conversational turn-taking, while introducing new terms related to geography, history, and civics. Art encourages descriptive language as children describe their creations, narrate stories through visual representations, and explore cultural art forms, enhancing their ability to express ideas. Music supports phonological awareness, vocabulary, and fluency through singing, call-and-response, and storytelling songs, while discussing instruments or lyrics promotes expressive communication.

Approaches to Learning

In social studies, exploring topics like community and culture encourages inquiry, problem-solving, and critical thinking as

children ask questions, engage in role-playing, and participate in group projects. Art activities inspire creativity and self-expression, allowing children to experiment with materials, take risks, and develop persistence as they work through challenges in creating and refining their work. Music nurtures focus and adaptability through rhythm, patterns, and call-and-response songs, while collaborative activities like singing in groups or playing instruments teach cooperation and active listening. Movement-based activities, such as dance, action songs, or games, support self-regulation, persistence, and flexibility as children follow multi-step directions and experiment with physical expressions.

Engagement and Motivation

Activities like singing, dancing, and hands-on art projects make learning fun and engaging, which can sustain attention and enthusiasm throughout the day. SSAMM activities provide opportunities for active, playful learning, which is developmentally appropriate for preschool-aged children.

Creativity and Imagination

Art and music encourage children to think outside the box, take creative risks, and express themselves in unique ways. Movement and dramatic play let children explore imaginative scenarios, such as pretending to be community helpers or creating a dance to represent animals in a story.

Foundational Skills

Social Studies: Helps children learn about relationships, fairness, and cultural diversity, which builds the foundation for citizenship and social responsibility. Art: Develops early visual literacy and symbolic thinking, which supports writing and reading readiness. Music: Enhances auditory processing, which is linked to language development and early math skills (e.g., rhythm and pattern recognition). Movement: Reinforces spatial awareness, balance, and self-regulation, which are important for both physical and academic tasks.

Multisensory Learning

SSAMM integrates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences, ensuring all types of learners can engage and succeed. For example, a child might learn about different cultures through a combination of listening to traditional music, creating related crafts, and acting out customs.

Social Skills and Collaboration

Many SSAMM activities are collaborative, such as working on group art projects, dancing in pairs, or role-playing community roles, which teach teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

Future Learning

SSAMM lays the groundwork for later academic subjects: Social Studies introduces geography, history, and civics. Art and music nurture creativity and innovation, which are valuable in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) fields. Movement promotes self-discipline and perseverance, which are essential for physical education and beyond.

Cultural Diversity

Integrating SSAMM provides opportunities to celebrate and explore cultural traditions, fostering inclusivity and a sense of belonging among children from diverse backgrounds.

Interdisciplinary Learning

SSAMM connects naturally to other areas of learning: Counting beats in music links to math. Drawing maps in Social Studies is tied to spatial reasoning. Moving to music teaches rhythm while enhancing physical fitness.

Reflection and Expression

Activities such as art, journaling, or role-playing community helpers allow children to process their thoughts and feelings while reflecting on their experiences.

The Power of Integrating Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement Across Developmental Stages

The previous sections detailed how **SSAMM** experiences foster development across all domains. Now, delve into the following vignettes to see how teachers seamlessly incorporate **SSAMM** into their daily routines with various age groups.

Preschool Vignette

A Day in Ms. Lopez's Preschool Classroom

The morning sunlight streamed through the windows of Ms. Lopez's preschool classroom as she gathered her students on the rug. "Today," she began with a smile, "we are going on a journey around the world!" The children's eyes lit up with curiosity.

Ms. Lopez **started by sharing a story about a young boy in Ghana who loved to drum**. As she read, she pointed to the colorful illustrations, encouraging the children to notice the patterns on his clothing and the instruments in the background. **Afterward,** she brought out a **small drum and invited the children to feel its texture and tap out rhythms just like the boy in the story.**

Next, the class moved to the **art table**, where paper an,d paints waited.

"Let's make Kente cloth patterns like the ones we saw in the book!" Ms. Lopez said, and then she showed the children how to use sponges to create bold, geometric designs. **As they painted, she encouraged them to talk about the colors and shapes they were using, tying the activity back to both culture and creativity.**

Later in the day, the children gathered again—this time for music and movement. Ms. Lopez **played a lively African drumbeat on the speakers**, and the children clapped, stomped, and swayed to the rhythm. "Let's move our bodies to the beat! What does this music make you feel?" she asked. Giggles and shouts of "Happy!" and "Excited!" filled the room as they explored movement and expression.

Before dismissal, the class came together for reflection. **"What did we learn today?"** Ms. Lopez asked. Hands shot up. "That people around the world make music!" one child said. "And their clothes have patterns like our paintings!" another added. Ms. Lopez beamed. In one day, her students had explored history, culture, art, and music—all while actively engaging their bodies and minds. She knew these experiences weren't just fun; they were helping her students build connections, develop empathy, and see the world through a richer, more vibrant lens.

This vignette illustrates how integrating social studies, art, music, and movement fosters meaningful, engaging learning experiences that support the whole child.

Toddler Vignette

Exploring the World with Toddler Curiosity

The morning sun filtered into the toddler room as **Ms. Emily set up a colorful, textured world map on the floor**. Toddlers gathered around, their faces filled with curiosity as she pointed to the countries. **"This is Africa, where the lions live, and this is Australia, where kangaroos hop!"** she said with excitement, her voice capturing their attention. As she pointed to each continent, she encouraged the toddlers to touch the map, letting them feel the bumpy texture of the raised areas.

Next, it was time for a little exploration with music and movement. Ms. Emily **played a lively tune from a popular Brazilian carnival**, the rhythm full of energy. **"Can you shake, wiggle, and jump like we're at a carnival?"** she asked. The toddlers giggled and clapped as they followed the beat, some twirling around in circles, others tapping their feet or bouncing in place. They were moving with abandon, their bodies instinctively responding to the music, and in doing so, they were developing motor skills while experiencing a piece of another culture.

After the dance party, **it was time for a creative art project.** Ms. Emily set out large sheets of paper and paints in vibrant hues. **"Let's paint like the artists in Mexico, who use bright colors for their beautiful murals!"** she explained. The toddlers eagerly dipped their brushes into the paint, spreading the bright yellow, red, and blue colors across the paper. One toddler painted wavy lines while another made big dots, their unique expressions reflecting the freedom and joy of creativity. Ms. Emily encouraged them to talk about the colors and shapes they were using, linking the art activity to the cultural exploration they had just experienced.

Later, as part of a calming transition, Ms. Emily gathered the toddlers in a cozy corner with a picture book about families from around the world. She turned the pages slowly, showing families in different settings: a family in India eating dinner together, a family in Sweden building snowmen. **"Families are all around the world, and they love each other just like your family does!"** she said warmly. The toddlers pointed at the pictures and chattered, identifying familiar objects and even mimicking actions like holding hands and sharing.

By the end of the day, the toddlers had danced, painted, listened to stories, and explored new cultures, gaining a richer understanding of the world around them. They may have been little, but through these experiences, they were beginning to connect with the larger world, developing social, emotional, and cognitive skills that would stay with them throughout their lives.

This vignette shows how toddlers can engage in meaningful activities that promote their development through music, movement, art, and social studies.

Infant Vignette

A World of Wonder in the Infant Room

Soft lullabies played in the background as Ms. Ava gently rocked baby Mateo in her arms. Across the cozy infant room, little Naomi sat on a soft mat, reaching toward a **basket filled with fabric squares of different textures—smooth silk, woven cotton, and patterned batik prints from around the world.** As she grasped a bright red square, Ms. Ava smiled. "**That's from India, Naomi. It's so soft, isn't it?"** She gently brushed it against Naomi's hand, reinforcing the connection between sensory exploration and cultural awareness.

Nearby, Oliver was on his tummy, watching in fascination as Ms. Ava **tapped a small hand drum. "Boom, boom, boom,"** she chanted. He kicked his legs excitedly, his body responding naturally to the rhythm. **Ms. Ava placed the drum near him, encouraging him to reach out and explore.** He patted it with a tiny fist, giggling at the sound.

As the morning continued, the infants gathered for a **musical movement experience**. **Ms. Ava cradled baby Mateo as she swayed to the beat of a gentle African lullaby. "Let's dance, Mateo,"** she cooed, shifting her weight side to side. **Naomi clapped her hands** as the rhythm played while **Oliver rocked back and forth on his hands and knees,** moving in time with the melody.

Later, it was time for a **simple art experience**. **Ms. Ava dipped Naomi's fingers into a small dish of edible, baby-safe paint and guided her hand onto a piece of paper. "Look at the colors you made!" she exclaimed.** Naomi stared in wonder, rubbing her fingers together to feel the cool, squishy texture. Meanwhile, Oliver explored chunky, non-toxic crayons, gripping them tightly and making tiny marks on a large sheet of paper taped to the floor.

As the day wound down, **Ms. Ava gathered the infants for a quiet story, showing them a board book filled with pictures of babies from different cultures. She pointed to the smiling faces. "Look, babies everywhere love to play and explore—just like you!"**

Though they were small, these tiny learners were already experiencing the world through music, movement, art, and social connections—laying the foundation for curiosity, creativity, and cultural appreciation.

This vignette captures the gentle yet meaningful ways that social studies, art, music, and movement can be woven into an infant's daily experiences.

Conclusion

By weaving Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (**SSAMM**) throughout the day, preschool teachers can create a rich, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning environment that nurtures the whole child and prepares them for lifelong success. The rest of this chapter will explore what schedules, routines, and transitions are, as well as ways to incorporate SSAMM into your daily schedule.

Reference

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1.2: Schedules, Routines, and Transitions

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the terms: schedules, routines, and transitions, as well as explain the relationship between the three.

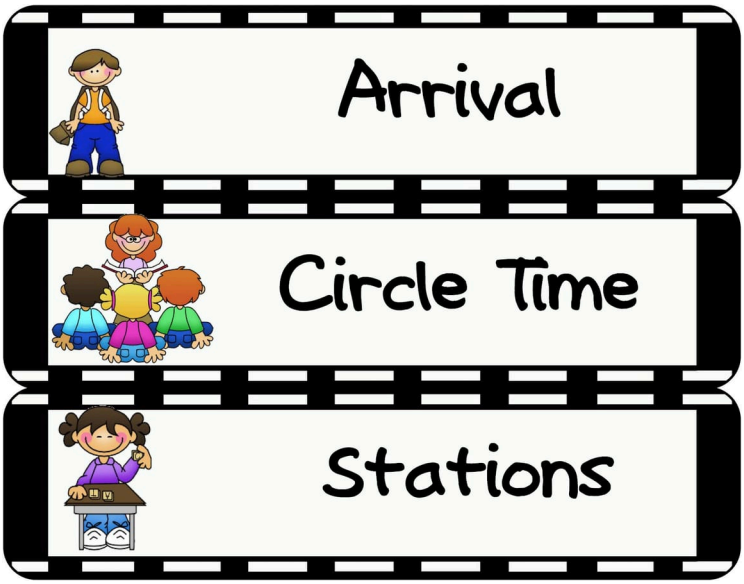


Figure 1.2.1: Schedule showing arrival, circle time, and stations.

Introduction

To effectively plan and implement Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) activities, preschool teachers must first understand the connection between schedules, routines, and transitions. One feature of a well-organized classroom is the use of a schedule and established routines. These are important because they influence a child's social and emotional development.

While referred to as the daily schedule, it is important to recognize that the flow, or the predictable order of the day, should be the focus rather than abiding by rigid timelines for the different parts of the day. While there may be parts of the day that are at fixed times (for example, meals or using a shared outdoor space), teachers should use flexibility to make the schedule meet the needs of the children. For example:

- If an activity seems to be coming to a natural conclusion earlier, consider transitioning to the next part of the day.
- If children are really engaged in an activity, consider giving them additional time to wrap up their exploration.
- Flexibility also comes in handy when there are changes that affect the schedule that are beyond your control, such as bad weather preventing outdoor play.[1]

Why Have a Daily Schedule?

A well-structured daily schedule is crucial in a preschool classroom as it helps create a predictable and secure environment for children. By establishing consistent routines, teachers can support children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Here are several key reasons why having a daily schedule is important:

Help Children Know What to Expect

Schedules and routines help children understand the expectations of the classroom environment, which may be very different than in other settings. Knowing expectations may lower behavior problems.

Enhance Feelings of Security

Predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable. Those children who have difficulty with change especially need to feel secure. Children who do not yet speak and understand English well also benefit from predictable and consistent classroom schedules and routines.

Influence a Child's Cognitive and Social Development

When periods of play are longer, children engage in more complex social and cognitive play.

Increase Child Engagement Rates

Child engagement is defined as the amount of time a child spends interacting with his or her environment (adults, peers, or materials) in a developmentally and contextually appropriate manner at different levels of competence. Schedules that give children choices, balanced activities, planned activities, and individual activities result in a higher level of engagement.

Factors Influencing Child Engagement

Several factors influence child engagement in the classroom. One key factor is the attention span of children, which can vary greatly. It is important for teachers to plan activities that can hold children's interest and keep them engaged. By considering their attention spans, teachers can create a learning environment that maximizes engagement and minimizes distractions. This can be achieved by using other adults to assist, incorporating novel materials, and limiting the duration of activities to ensure children stay engaged throughout.

Another important factor is the alertness level of children, which fluctuates throughout the day. Planning activities that require more attention and listening skills during times when children are most alert can enhance engagement. Conversely, calming activities should follow more active ones to help children transition smoothly. Teachers should also be mindful of children who may be tired or sick.

Adult availability is also crucial. Having more adults available during active parts of the day can support children's learning and help manage the classroom effectively. Additionally, allowing sufficient time for children to fully engage in activities is essential. Longer periods of play enable children to explore, experiment, and persist in their tasks, leading to more creative use of materials and the development of social relationships. When children engage in longer periods of play, they show higher levels of exploration, experimentation, and persistence, utilize materials in more creative ways, and develop social relationships.[2]

Creating the Daily Schedule

A well-organized daily schedule is fundamental to the success of a preschool classroom. It creates a predictable structure that helps children feel secure and fosters an environment conducive to learning. An effective schedule should include designated time blocks for various activities, be thoughtfully sequenced, and strike a balance between different types of experiences throughout the day.

Components of the Daily Schedule

Blocks of Time: The first component is "blocks of time," which are the large chunks of time set aside for classroom activities. Preschool schedules typically include:

- **Large group or circle time**
- **Child-initiated play time**

- **Snack time and meals**
- **Outdoor time**
- **Rest time**

Sequence: The next component is the sequence of these blocks of time. Sequencing requires taking into consideration multiple factors, including:

- **Method of arrival/departure**: Whether children arrive by bus or are transported by families.
- **Schedules of other classrooms**: For example, determining which classroom goes outdoors at what times.
- **Daily routines**: While some routines, like meal times, are included in the schedule, others, such as bathroom breaks and clean-up routines, may not be explicitly listed.

Balance: When planning the schedule, it is important to provide balance. This includes:

- **Alternating active with quiet activities**: This helps children with self-control.
- **Mix of small group and large group activities**: Ensures varied social interactions and learning experiences.
- **Variety in activities**: Activities should differ in noise level, pace, the person leading (child vs. adult), and location (indoor vs. outdoor).
- **Mix of teacher-guided and child-initiated activities**: Balances structured learning with opportunities for independent exploration.

By thoughtfully planning and balancing these components, teachers can create a daily schedule that supports the diverse needs of preschool children, fostering an environment conducive to their overall development.



Figure 1.2.2: This is a visual schedule that shows children images of the different parts of their day.[3]



Figure 1.2.3: Here is a schedule that combines visual cues, written times, and text descriptions.[4]

Balance of Child-Initiated Play and Teacher-Guided Activities

Balancing the daily schedule involves incorporating both child-initiated play and teacher-guided activities. This balance ensures that children have opportunities to explore and learn independently while also benefiting from structured, guided experiences. Here's how these activities are integrated into the schedule:

Child-Initiated Play

A daily schedule that ensures ample time for children to initiate their own play in well-developed interest areas is critical to teaching and learning. Young children need ample time to engage in play in the company of peers in order to build their ideas, pose problems, try out solutions, and negotiate and exchange ideas. When children initiate, organize, and develop their own play in their interest areas, it is called child-initiated learning. At times, children choose to play alone, but frequently, child-initiated play takes place in small groups of their own choosing.

Teacher-Guided Activities

In a schedule with ample time for children to initiate play in well-stocked interest areas, there are times when teachers organize and guide specific activities for children. Such teacher-guided curriculum activities are clearly distinct from child-initiated curriculum activities. Teacher-guided activities occur in two contexts: small groups and large groups. A small group would consist of one teacher working with a group of four to eight children. A large group is typically a gathering of all the children in an early childhood setting. Each context serves a different purpose and requires different preparation and different teaching strategies.

Small Group

For some aspects of the curriculum, teachers may choose to organize an activity with a small group of children. Although initiated and guided by the teacher, an effective small-group encounter of this nature should still be rich in possibilities for children to contribute and negotiate ideas with each other.

Teacher-guided activities in small groups work best in quiet spaces, away from the distractions of the full group, and provide a manageable context for children to discuss and explore ideas and experiences. The teacher listens to children's ideas, helps orchestrate the give-and-take of ideas among children, poses ideas or problems for children to wonder about, explore together, or even solve.

Away from the distractions of a large group, teachers can easily observe, listen, and converse with children in a small group, as well as note how individual children think, express ideas, relate with others, and use their emerging skills. Such teacher-guided conversations can enrich children's learning in all domains, particularly the children's language and vocabulary development. In addition, teachers can intentionally guide the development of specific skills by planning small-group activities (e.g., songs, games, shared reading) for short periods of time that playfully engage children in using specific emerging skills.

Small-group activities have several advantages over large-group activities. With small groups of children, teachers can readily observe, listen, and document children's developmental progress. Teachers can also individualize the curriculum and use questions or prompts to scaffold each child's thinking in more complex ways.

Whether the activities are child-initiated or teacher-guided, children's use of materials in interest areas provides teachers with excellent opportunities to observe how they build concepts and skills and how they negotiate ideas with others. Moments of observed play and interactions also provide teachers with ideas on how to extend children's exploration and learning through future encounters with related materials that add novelty, challenge, and complexity in each domain.

Large Group

Large groups provide another context for teacher-guided activities. The large group—typically a gathering of the entire class—works well for:

- **Singing**
- **Acting out songs and stories**
- **Playing games**

- **Sharing experiences with each other**
- **Telling stories**
- **Building a sense of community**
- **Organizing the daily schedule and activities**

Storytelling is one of the more popular large-group experiences, one that has rich potential for adding to children's understanding of the world around them. Storytelling allows teachers, children, family members, as well as storytellers from the community, to tap into and build children's knowledge and experiences in meaningful ways.

Large-group time is also when teachers let the whole group of children know what new experiences will be available in the interest areas or what will happen in small groups that day. Additionally, large group gatherings that occur at the end of the day provide opportunities to review noteworthy happenings and to anticipate what will be available the next day.[6]

Examples of Daily Schedules for Preschool Classrooms

Table 1.2.1: Half-Day Program Sample

Time of Day	Routine/Activity	Description
8:00	Arrival/Greetings	Wash Hands, Sign in, Get Name Tags
8:05-8:20	Group Time	Welcome, Songs, Stories, Discussions
8:20-9:30	Open Choice Time Outdoors	Explore classroom areas
9:30	Clean-up	Wash Hands, transition to indoors
9:35-10:45	Snack/Open Choice Indoors	
10:45	Clean-up	
10:50-11	Closing Circle	

Table 1.2.2: Full Day Program Sample Daily Schedule[7]

Time of Day	Routine/Activity	Description
8:00	Arrival/Greetings	Wash Hands, Sign in, Get Name Tags
8:05-8:20	Group Time	Welcome, Songs, Stories, Discussions

Time of Day	Routine/Activity	Description
8:20-9:30	Open Choice Time Outdoors	Explore classroom areas
9:30	Clean-up	Wash Hands, transition to indoors
9:35-11:00	Snack/Open Choice Indoors	
11:00	Clean-up	
11:10-11:25	Story Time	Transition to wash hands for lunch
11:30-11:50	Lunch	
11:50	Explore books on rest Mats	
12:10-2:00	Rest Time	
2:00-3:15	Indoor Choice Time/Snack	
3:15	Clean-up	
3:20	Large Group Circle	Games, Songs, Stories
3:40	Explore Outdoors	
5:00	Clean-up	
5:05	Indoor Small Group/Choice Centers	Fewer areas open

Routines and Rituals

Schedules define the whole day, whereas routines are more specific sets of regularly occurring behaviors. Routines provide some security and a sense of what comes next; children are able to anticipate what will happen and, thus, feel more secure.

Daily routines and rituals also provide a second context for the curriculum. They offer possibilities for children to use their

emerging skills and to apply emerging concepts and ideas.

Early childhood daily routines include:

- Arrivals and departures
- Mealtimes
- Nap times
- Diapering
- Toileting
- Dressing
- Handwashing
- Tooth-brushing
- Transitions between one place and another

Rituals include:

- Sign-in sheets
- Health checks
- Waiting lists
- Attendance counts
- Dictated stories
- Reminder notes
- Voting

Care Routines as Learning Opportunities

Children sit down for a meal, wash their hands, and put their jackets and shoes on hundreds of times, providing excellent opportunities for them to use and build emerging skills and concepts. In group care, the care routines during arrivals, departures, meals, naps, diapering, toileting, and dressing provide excellent opportunities for children to use and challenge their emerging skills and concepts. For example:

Infant Interaction

When an infant whose diaper is about to be changed hears her teacher describe what it is she is about to do, the infant experiences a flood of words, which eventually become an anticipated phrase that gives meaning to a familiar experience. When this same infant hears a request to put his arm into the sleeve of a shirt, he is invited to demonstrate that he has understood this phrase and experiences the joy that comes with sharing meaning with the teacher.

Preschool Child Engagement

When a preschool child looks in anticipation each morning at the helper chart to see what job she gets to do that day, they are invited not only to cooperate in the care of the classroom but also to build their emerging skills in understanding the meaning of print that accompanies the photo or drawing.

Care routines are natural opportunities for children to engage in learning. Therefore, teachers plan the routines of care and the daily rituals that pepper the day in ways that invite children to be active participants and to use and build their emerging skills and concepts in meaningful situations.[8]

Learning From Classroom Routines

The vignette below featuring **toddlers** shows the kind of learning that occurs in a lunchtime routine. The lunchtime routine supports early social studies learning by helping toddlers understand routines, roles, and community through a shared mealtime. By making choices, using tools, and taking turns, children practice responsibility and cooperation. The teacher's guidance helps them feel like valued group members, building early concepts of citizenship and belonging.

Toddler Lunchtime Vignette

Four toddlers are seated at a low table for lunch.

Their primary care teacher sits with them at the table. To his right, on a low bench, the primary care teacher has a bin that holds everything he needs for the meal. He pulls out bibs for each toddler and helps each toddler put one on.

Each toddler finds a cube chair to sit in. The teacher puts an empty bowl in front of the toddler on his left. He offers this toddler a pair of small plastic tongs, holds a plate of small sandwiches, and asks, “Would you like to take a sandwich?” The toddler grabs the tongs and, after a few trials, manages to pick up one of the sandwiches and drop it onto his plate.

Later, after each toddler has taken a sandwich, the teacher pulls from the bin a clear plastic measuring cup on which a red line is drawn at the one-cup mark. He fills the measuring cup to the red line. He places an empty glass in front of a toddler and, offering the toddler the measuring cup, says, “Would you like to pour?” The toddler wraps his hand around the handle and tips the cup over his glass.

He spills a bit at first, but adjusts his hand and manages to empty the measuring cup. He looks up at the teacher and smiles. The teacher smiles in response, saying, “You poured your milk, Stephan! You know how to do it!” The toddler seated next to Stephan reaches for the empty measuring cup. The teacher says, “And now you can pour milk into your glass, Alexi. I’ll put the milk in the measuring cup first.”[9]

The following vignette shows the kind of learning that occurs during a cleanup routine in a **preschool** classroom when the transition is related to their theme of study, community helpers. This community helper-themed transition helps preschoolers learn by encouraging them to role-play different jobs, like firefighters, doctors, and mail carriers, during clean-up and movement to circle time. Pretending to take on these roles builds an understanding of how community helpers contribute to society. It also sparks curiosity and sets the stage for deeper discussion and learning.

Preschool Clean-Up Routine: Community Helpers Vignette

As the morning free-play session came to an end, Ms. Clara stood near the classroom rug, holding a set of colorful cards depicting different community helpers. She gently rang the bell to signal transition time. "Friends, it’s time to tidy up and get ready for circle time," she said with a warm smile. "But today, we’re going to use our imaginations and pretend to be community helpers as we move to the rug!"

The children paused their play, their attention shifting to Ms. Clara as she held up the first card. It showed a firefighter climbing a ladder. "If you think you’d like to be a firefighter who helps keep people safe, stand up and pretend to climb a ladder as you head to the rug," she explained. Giggles filled the room as several children began miming climbing motions, making their way to the circle.

Next, Ms. Clara held up a card with a doctor wearing a stethoscope. "Now, who wants to be a doctor? Pretend you’re checking someone’s heartbeat while you walk to the rug." A group of children eagerly stood up, pressing imaginary stethoscopes to the air in front of them as they joined the circle.

Finally, Ms. Clara showed a picture of a mail carrier with a bag of letters. "If you’d like to be a mail carrier who delivers important letters, pretend to carry your mailbag while you walk to the rug," she announced. A few children marched purposefully, swinging imaginary bags, and sat down with their classmates.

Once everyone was seated, Ms. Clara held up each card again and asked, "Who can tell me what a firefighter does? How about a doctor or a mail carrier?" Hands shot up as the children excitedly shared their ideas. "Firefighters put out fires!" called out Noah. "Doctors help us when we’re sick," added Mia. "Mail carriers bring us letters and packages," chimed in Alex.

Ms. Clara nodded approvingly. "That’s right! Every community helper has an important job. You all did a wonderful job pretending to be helpers today. Let’s talk more about what makes each of them special."

> The children beamed with pride, their curiosity sparked, as Ms. Clara transitioned smoothly into their morning circle discussion about community helpers. Through this simple routine, the children not only practiced transitioning but also deepened their understanding of the roles that help their community thrive.[10]

Important Tips to Remember About Schedules



Figure 1.2.4: Scheduling Tips[11]

Transitions

It is important to focus on creating and managing smooth transitions between activities in the classroom. Reasons to address transitions between activities in early childhood classrooms include:

Time Consumption

Transitions take up a great deal of time in preschool classrooms.

Waiting Periods

During transitions, children often spend a lot of time waiting (e.g., waiting until everyone has finished their snack, waiting for everyone to clean up before beginning large group time). All of this time waiting with nothing to do can lead to unrealistic expectations and challenging behaviors.

Stressful Experiences

Some children (and adults) have stressful and frustrating experiences during transitions between activities (e.g., children arguing over who took out what toys and who should put them away; children not knowing where to put certain toys when they are done with them; children not knowing what to do, children not knowing expectations for the transition).

Essential Skill Development

Many preschool teachers and other caregivers consider children's ability to independently make transitions between activities one of the essential skills needed in group contexts such as preschool and kindergarten.

Supporting Successful Transitions

There are numerous strategies that can be used to ensure well-organized transitions between activities. These include strategies you use before the transition, during the transition, and following the transition.

Before the Transition:

Plan for what adults will do during transition times

Which adult is responsible for greeting the children? Who will begin looking at books on the carpet with the children?

Teach children the expectations for the transition routine

Teaching children how to clean up and how to line up will reduce the length of transition times. By reducing transition times, more time is available for children to spend on other learning activities. As children become familiar with the expectations, problem behaviors are less likely to occur.

Provide verbal and nonverbal cues before transitions

- **Verbal Cues**: “Five minutes ‘til snack." "It’s almost time for clean-up."
- **Visual Cues**: Show pictures of the next activity.
- **Auditory Cues**: Use sound to indicate a transition is about to occur, for example, beat a drum.

Use consistent transition cues

Once a transition cue has been established, it should be used consistently to signal the transition.

During the Transition

Engage Children in Transition Activities

- **Activities**: Sing songs, play word or guessing games, recite rhymes, and organize finger plays. Transition activities provide children with an activity to complete while other children are still transitioning. These activities also encourage children to finish their previous tasks so that they can play the game or sing the song. During these activities, skills related to the transition can also be taught (e.g., setting the table for snack or lunch, sorting toys during clean-up time).

Allow Children Adequate Time to Finish Projects or Activities

- **Time Management**: Ensure children do not become frustrated by activities ending too soon. Give them a warning that it is about time to change activities.

Plan Something to Engage Children Who Finish Quickly

- **Engagement**: Plan activities for children who finish cleaning up and get to the large group quickly, such as looking at books while waiting for other children to finish cleaning up.

Individualize Support to Accommodate Individual Children’s Needs

- **Visual Aids**: Photos to help anticipate what activity is next.
- **Language Support**: Directions given in a child’s home language or sign language.
- **Personalized Warnings**: An individual warning to a child that it will soon be time to clean up and begin a new activity.
- **Tailored Support**: Some children may need an adult to provide a five-minute, three-minute, and one-minute warning before clean-up, while the rest of the class might need only a three-minute warning.

After Transitions

Provide Positive Attention and Feedback

- **Encouragement**: When children pick up toys without much prompting, share with them how this shows how well they take care of the classroom materials.
- **Teamwork Appreciation**: When children are working together to accomplish the task more quickly, let them know how much you appreciate their teamwork (e.g., “Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning together and moving to the carpet”).

Promote Independence During Transitions

- **Individual Movement**: Allow children to move individually from one area to another when they complete an activity (e.g., as children finish snack, they are encouraged to go to the carpet and choose a book; as children finish putting away their coats and backpacks, they are encouraged to get a puzzle).
- **Helping Others**: Teach children to help others (e.g., have children move as partners from one activity to another, or ask one child to help another child gather his/her backpack).
- **Self-Monitoring**: Help children self-monitor during transitions (e.g., children can be asked to think about how quietly or quickly they moved from one activity to another).

This vignette offers an opportunity to observe the social learning unfolding during a transition routine and to reflect on the intentional planning that supported it.

Preschool Dismissal Routine: "Friendship" Vignette

Earlier that week, Ms. Jamie had introduced a unit on friendship, reading books, leading discussions, and modeling kind behaviors throughout the day. She chose *“**How to Be a Friend**”* as the closing story before recess to reinforce these ideas in a meaningful way.

As the story ended, Ms. Jamie said warmly, “Now let’s practice being good friends as we line up for recess.” She had prepared for this transition by thinking about ways to connect the book’s message to real-life experiences. Instead of calling children one at a time, she invited them to choose a partner to walk with: “If you’d like to hold a friend’s hand, find a buddy and line up together.”

Some children quickly paired up, while others looked around uncertainly. Ms. Jamie noticed and gently stepped in to support, saying, “You can ask someone, ‘Would you like to be my partner?’ That’s a friendly way to make someone feel included.” Soon, even the quieter children found partners. As the line formed, Ms. Jamie commented, “I see so many kind friends helping each other. Just like in our book!”

Through this carefully planned transition, Ms. Jamie created a space for children to apply social-emotional learning in a natural context. By watching, listening, and guiding in the moment, she supported not only a smooth routine but also meaningful learning about friendship and inclusion. [13]

Thoughtfully and intentionally planned transition activities—like the friendship-themed transition in the vignette above—support children’s learning by turning routines into meaningful learning moments. In this example, Ms. Jamie **connects** a read-aloud about friendship to the transition to recess, reinforcing social-emotional concepts like kindness, cooperation, and inclusion. By inviting children to choose a buddy and modeling friendly language, she promotes communication and decision-making. These intentional choices not only support skill development but also create a predictable, engaging routine that helps children apply classroom learning in real-life social contexts. The chart below illustrates how planning and observation during such transitions deepen learning while making everyday moments count. First, you will see an example of what happened, followed by what the children learned, and finally, the planning the teacher did to make the learning possible.

Reflection

Reflect on the Friendship-Themed Transition[14]

What Happened in the Vignette	Reflective Thinking: What Learning Is Happening?	Planning That Made This Possible
Ms. Jamie read *"How to Be a Friend"* before transitioning to recess.	Children are exposed to positive social behaviors and vocabulary related to friendship.	Select a story that connects directly to social-emotional goals.
Ms. Jamie says, "Let's practice being good friends as we line up for recess."	She connects the book to real life, helping children see the value of kind actions.	Planning a transition that reinforces the story's theme in a meaningful way.
Children are invited to choose a friend to walk with.	Promotes decision-making, social connection, and peer interaction. Encourages inclusion and communication.	Anticipating opportunities for children to practice friendship skills in a real context.
Some children pair up quickly; others hesitate.	Highlights different social comfort levels and needs for support.	Being prepared to scaffold interactions for children who need help initiating contact.
Ms. Jamie models language: "You can ask someone, 'Would you like to be my partner?'"	Children are learning how to use friendly language to invite others and show empathy.	Teaching and reinforcing friendship scripts during previous discussions and modeling.
Ms. Jamie comments, "I see so many kind friends helping each other."	Acknowledging and reinforcing positive behavior strengthens learning.	Intentional use of praise and observation t,o support social development.

Conclusion

Schedules, routines, and transitions are the backbone of a well-run early childhood environment.

By structuring the day into predictable yet flexible segments and consistently practicing care routines, educators help children feel more secure, engaged, and ready to learn. Strategic transitions—whether moving from outdoor play to snack time or from circle to small groups—can become learning opportunities in themselves, fostering children's independence and social skills. When these elements are thoughtfully planned and balanced, children experience deeper exploration, smoother participation in group activities, and a greater sense of community in the classroom.

References

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1.3: Incorporating Social Studies into Daily Routines

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the various ways Social Studies can be integrated into daily routines.

Introduction

Incorporating Social Studies into your daily schedule can be seamlessly achieved by integrating social studies topics and concepts into everyday routines such as story time, playtime, art, and music. Tailor these integrations to align with the themes and activities in your classroom, ensuring they are developmentally appropriate for the age of your students. The images provided show examples of developmentally appropriate social studies activities for young children, with each picture linking to a website where you can learn more about implementing the activity.

Examples

Toddlers and their teacher explored flags by creating their own version of the American Flag. They searched the classroom for red and blue items and used the top of a storage tote as the base for their flag. This activity not only taught them about flags but also helped them learn colors, shapes, and new vocabulary words.



Figure 1.3.1: Flag activity.

Preschoolers and their teacher are learning about recycling by examining the characteristics of various items. The children identify these characteristics and sort the items into appropriate bins. The teacher reads books about recycling and leads a discussion on why recycling is beneficial for communities and the environment.



Figure 1.3.2: Learning about recycling.

Teachers can help children learn to regulate their emotions by reading books that focus on feelings, mindfulness, and coping strategies. For preschoolers, books like *When Sophie Gets Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang can help children understand and manage their emotions. For toddlers, *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas is a great choice to help them identify and understand their feelings. Additionally, providing calming activities such as play dough, bubbles, and fidget toys can be beneficial. Teachers can also create calming baskets filled with these items to help children manage their emotions effectively.



Figure 1.3.3: Calming book with toys.

Children can learn about different places and where people live by engaging with kid-friendly maps and puzzles. These activities can include colorful world maps, interactive floor puzzles, and map-themed games that make learning about geography fun and accessible.



Figure 1.3.4: Map activity.

Social Studies Integration

Below, you will explore vignettes demonstrating what integrating Social Studies into your day might look like in various age classrooms, and you will discover additional ideas for integrating Social Studies into daily routines.

Preschoolers

Preschool teachers center their instruction around themes to help children learn social studies concepts. They weave the concept they want the children to learn into their daily activities. Read the vignette below to discover how.

Preschool Social Studies Vignette

Integrating Social Studies into the Preschool Day

It's a sunny morning at Maple Grove Preschool, and the children have just gathered in the reading corner for Circle Time with Ms. Emma. Today's theme is "**Our Community**," and Ms. Emma introduces a large picture book titled "***The Neighborhood Around Us***."

As she flips through the pages, the children eagerly point out different buildings and landmarks, like the post office, fire station, and grocery store. Ms. Emma asks, "**Who knows what we can find at the fire station?**" Little Alex raises his hand. "**Fire trucks!**" he exclaims. "**And firefighters!**" adds Maria.

Ms. Emma smiles and builds on their knowledge. "**That's right! Firefighters help keep our community safe. Can anyone think of a time when they saw a firefighter?**" The group shares stories about seeing fire trucks during parades or when the fire station had an open house.

After the book, the children move to the art table, where Ms. Emma has set out large sheets of paper and crayons. "**Let's create our own neighborhood,**" she says. "**What buildings and people live in our neighborhood?**" The children draw houses, parks, a small school, and a store. As they draw, they discuss the role of each building and how people in the community help one another.

Meanwhile, Ms. Emma asks Liam, who is building a little house with blocks in the dramatic play area, "**What do you think a neighbor might do to help someone?**" Liam replies, "**They can bring food when someone's sick!**"

Later, the class walks outside for their daily outdoor play. Along the path, **Ms. Emma points out various community helpers at work**—a sanitation worker collecting trash, a mail carrier delivering letters, and a neighbor watering flowers. She encourages the children to wave and say thank you as they pass by.

As the children continue their outdoor play, they role-play being community helpers, pretending to be firefighters, mail carriers, and store owners. The experience gives them a deeper understanding of how different people contribute to the community.

Before heading inside, Ms. Emma gathers the children for one last circle, asking, "**What did we learn today about our community?**" The children excitedly share their thoughts—about neighbors, helpers, and the importance of working together to make the community a better place.

Through stories, art, and active engagement, social studies is woven into the preschool day, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to the community for these young learners.

Incorporate Social Studies Throughout the Preschool Day

Morning Meetings

Community Building

Start the day with a "Who We Are" activity, where children share something about themselves, their families, or their traditions, promoting identity and diversity.

Calendar and Weather Discussions

Use calendar time to talk about holidays, events, or seasons. Highlight cultural or historical events when appropriate, like the first day of fall or Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Calendar Time in Preschool: A New Approach - The Empowered Provider

Figure 1.3.5: Calendar activity.

Classroom Jobs

Community Helper Roles

Assign classroom jobs that mimic real-world roles, such as "recycling monitor" or "line leader," and explain how these roles exist in the community (e.g., waste collectors, leaders in a group).

Rotating Responsibility

Rotate jobs and discuss fairness, cooperation, and the importance of everyone contributing to the "classroom community."



Figure 1.3.6: Dress up activity.

Transitions

Music and Movement

Use songs or chants about community helpers (e.g., “The Farmer in the Dell”) during transitions to keep Social Studies themes present.

Imaginative Play

Transition by pretending to travel, such as flying on a "plane" to another country or walking to a "market" to learn about places and communities.

Language Development

Play language games such as "Who Am I?". Describe a community helper or social studies concept as children line up or move to the next activity or area. For example, say, “I wear a uniform and drive a big red truck. Who am I?”, or “I help people cross the street safely. Who am I?”



Figure 1.3.7: Steps to help with transitioning to the next activity.

Snack and Mealtime

Cultural Foods

Incorporate snacks that represent different cultures and discuss where the food comes from (e.g., rice from Asia or tortillas from Latin America).

Family Traditions

During meals, invite children to share how their families celebrate special occasions or what foods they enjoy at home.

Table Manners Around the World

Introduce how different cultures approach mealtime, such as eating with chopsticks, hands, or utensils.

Holiday Foods

Explore snacks associated with various cultural holidays, such as Hanukkah latkes, Chinese New Year dumplings, or Diwali sweets.

"Farm to Table"

Discuss how food is grown, harvested, and transported to your table, connecting it to local geography or global trade.



Figure 1.3.8: Snack routines.

Storytime

Social Studies-Themed Books

Read books about families, cultures, and community roles (e.g., *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña or *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold).

Follow-Up Discussions

After reading, engage children in conversations about similarities and differences in families, traditions, or community settings.

Developing Vocabulary and Concepts

Social studies books introduce vocabulary related to social studies topics, such as family, community, country, neighbor, and environment. Hearing and discussing these words in context helps preschoolers build their social studies lexicon (the vocabulary of a person, language, or branch of knowledge).



Figure 1.3.9: Book with social theme.

Centers and Playtime

Dramatic Play

Set up play areas that reflect community places, like a grocery store, post office, or doctor's office. Include costumes and props to encourage role-playing.

Block Play

Encourage children to build community structures like schools, libraries, or homes using blocks and relate them to the local neighborhood.



Figure 1.3.10: Grocery store play area.

Art and Creative Activities

Map Making

Have children create simple maps of the classroom, playground, or their neighborhood, promoting spatial awareness and understanding of place.

Cultural Crafts

Create crafts inspired by different cultures, such as making paper lanterns for Lunar New Year or sand art inspired by Indigenous traditions.

Architectural Design

After discussing famous landmarks and buildings, children can build their own structures using blocks, clay, or cardboard. They can design their own versions of landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower or the Great Wall of China, and present them to the class.



Figure 1.3.11: 3-D map activity.

Music and Movement

Cultural Music

Play music from different cultures during dance or movement activities, discussing where it comes from and how it is used.

Action Songs

Use songs that describe community roles or places, like “This is the Way We Go to School,” to connect music with Social Studies themes.



Figure 1.3.12: Music activity.

Nature and Outdoor Time

Neighborhood Walks

Organize neighborhood walks where children can observe and talk about community helpers, landmarks, and local features.

Community Garden

Involve children in creating and maintaining a garden, discussing how it mirrors larger community gardens or farming practices.



Figure 1.3.13: Gardening activity.

Special Activities

Community Visitors

Invite community helpers like firefighters, postal workers, or librarians to visit and talk about their roles.

Global Awareness

Plan themed days where children learn about a specific culture through stories, activities, and foods (e.g., "Italy Day" with pasta play and Italian flag crafts).



Figure 1.3.14: Community helper visit.

Reflection and Discussion

End-of-Day Sharing

Close the day with a brief discussion or reflection where children can share something they learned about the community or world.

"What's in the News" for Kids

Share simple, child-friendly current events, like how people helped each other during a recent weather event, to promote awareness of broader communities.

By embedding **Social Studies** into these daily routines, preschool teachers can foster a sense of community, cultural understanding, and awareness of the world in developmentally appropriate ways.

Toddlers

Toddler teachers can incorporate Social Studies into the daily routine in various engaging and developmentally appropriate ways, helping toddlers understand the world around them, build social skills, and develop a sense of community.

Toddler Social Studies Vignette

Integrating Social Studies into the Toddler Day

It's a bright morning at Little Sprouts Toddler Care, and the toddlers are gathering in their cozy circle area with their caregiver, Ms. Claire. **Today, the theme is "People Around Us," and Ms. Claire begins by showing a large picture book titled *"The Helpers in Our Neighborhood."***

As she flips through the pages, the toddlers point to familiar faces, such as the mail carrier, the doctor, and the construction worker. Ms. Claire asks, "**Who knows what the doctor does?**" Little Ben, pointing at the doctor's picture, says, "***Fix!***" Ms. Claire nods, "**Yes! The doctor helps people feel better when they're sick. What about the mail carrier?**" Ella raises her hand and says, "**Brings letters!**"

Ms. Claire smiles and asks, "**What happens if we want to send a letter to someone?**" A few toddlers respond in unison, "**We send it!**" She continues, "**Yes, the mail carrier helps take our letters to other people in the neighborhood!**"

After the story, Ms. Claire encourages the toddlers to engage in a **fun matching activity**. She holds up different small figurines—each representing a community helper—and asks, "**Can you find the right place for the doctor, the mail carrier, and the builder?**" As the toddlers pick up the figurines and place them on a large community map, they talk about the different helpers and their jobs. "**The doctor works in a hospital**," Ms. Claire explains. "**Where does the builder work?**" Little Emma, with a broad smile, says, "**In the big house!**"

Later in the day, it's time for **outdoor play**. Ms. Claire takes the toddlers to the playground, where **she encourages them to act out the roles they've learned** about. "**Who wants to be a builder?**" she asks. Max eagerly raises his hand, and s**oon, he's using toy tools and blocks to "build"** a new playground structure. **Ella pretends to be a mail carrier**, carrying small bags and delivering letters to her friends.

As the toddlers engage in pretend play, Ms. Claire observes them interacting with each other in their new roles. Ben, who is playing the part of a doctor, says, "**I help you feel better!**" as he gently taps his toy stethoscope on Emma's back. "**Thank you, Doctor Ben**," she giggles, and the play continues.

Before nap time, Ms. Claire gathers the toddlers for one final circle, asking, "**What helpers did we talk about today?**" Little voices respond, "Doctor!" "**Mail**!" "**Builder!**" Ms. Claire nods, "**That's right! And we are all part of a big, helpful neighborhood.**"

Through stories, pretend play, and hands-on activities, social studies becomes a meaningful part of the toddlers' day, helping them begin to understand the people who contribute to their community and the roles they play in the world around them.

Incorporate Social Studies into Toddlers' Daily Routines

Here are several strategies for integrating social studies concepts into the toddler classroom:

Understanding Family and Community

Family Photos and Stories

Encourage toddlers to bring in family photos and share them with their peers. Teachers can create a "family wall" to celebrate diversity and introduce the concept of different family structures, roles, and traditions.

Role-Playing

Use dress-up clothes and props for role-playing activities where toddlers can pretend to be family members, community helpers (e.g., police officers, firefighters), or workers from various jobs. This helps toddlers learn about different roles in society.



Figure 1.3.15: Family tree activity.

Learning About Diversity

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Introduce toddlers to various cultural celebrations, customs, and holidays from around the world. Books, music, and art projects related to these cultures can be used to highlight similarities and differences.

Inclusive Materials

Provide diverse books, dolls, and toys that reflect a variety of cultures, races, abilities, and family structures. These materials encourage understanding, empathy, and respect for diversity.

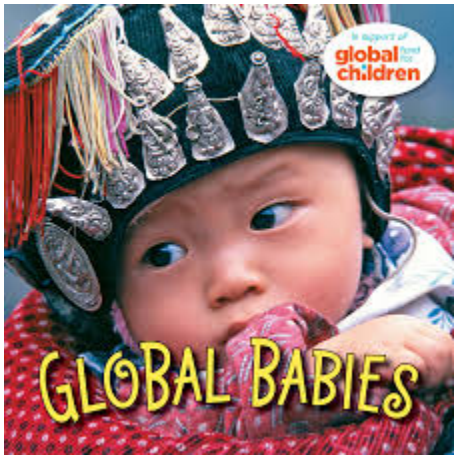


Figure 1.3.16: Inclusive book.

Community Helpers

Visitors from the Community

Invite local community helpers (such as a firefighter, police officer, nurse, or postman) to visit the classroom and talk to the children about their roles. This gives toddlers a tangible connection to the community and the concept of working together for

the common good.

Field Trips

Take short, supervised field trips to local businesses, parks, or libraries where toddlers can observe and interact with the community. These experiences help children understand their place within the community.



Figure 1.3.17: Firefighter visit.

Exploring Environment and Places

Map Exploration

Introduce toddlers to simple maps of the classroom, school, or community. Show them how to navigate these spaces and discuss how different places serve different purposes (e.g., the grocery store, the library, the playground).

Local Landmarks

Use pictures or toys representing local landmarks to help toddlers understand their environment and the importance of different places in their community.



Figure 1.3.18: Map-drawing activity.

Teaching About Rules and Responsibilities

Classroom Rules

Involve toddlers in setting up classroom rules and routines, helping them understand concepts like fairness, respect, and taking turns. Reinforce positive behavior and social interaction through guided play and group activities.

Sharing and Cooperation

Foster a cooperative environment where toddlers can work together on projects, share materials, and engage in group activities, such as building a tower or collaborating on an art project. These experiences teach them about teamwork and responsibility.

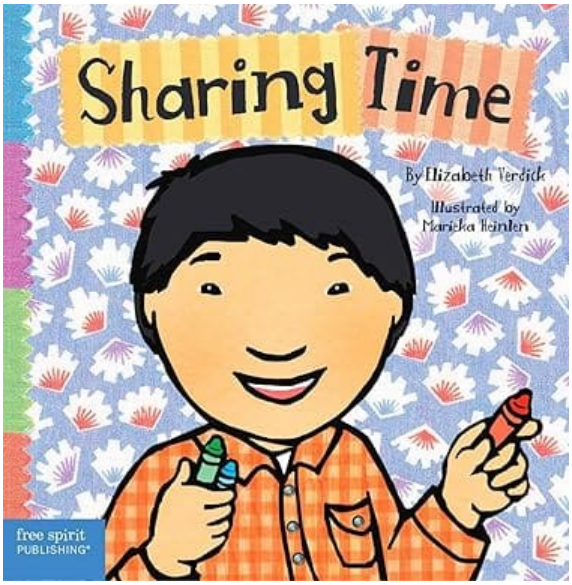


Figure 1.3.19: Sharing book.

Simple Concepts of Time and History

Daily Schedules

Use visual schedules to help toddlers understand the routine of the day. Discuss the concept of "today," "tomorrow," and "yesterday" to help them begin to understand time in a simple way.

Life Cycle Activities

Teach toddlers about the life cycle of animals (e.g., the stages of a butterfly or plant growth) to introduce basic historical concepts of change over time.

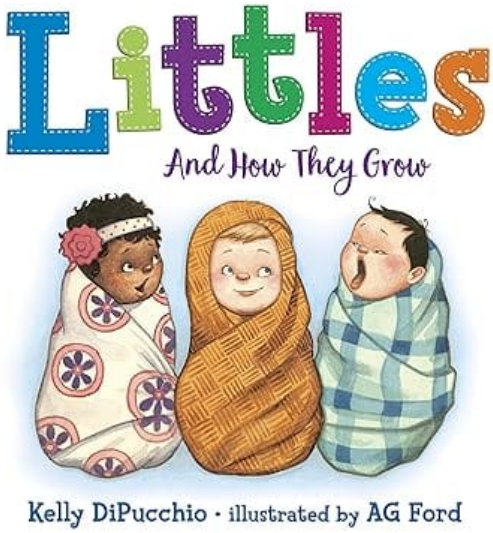


Figure 1.3.20: Life cycle book.

Storytelling and Books

Books about People and Places

Read stories that involve diverse characters, communities, and different ways of life. Books that feature community-building or understanding other people's lives can help toddlers build social awareness and empathy.

Social Stories

Use social stories to help toddlers understand concepts such as making friends, expressing emotions, or dealing with difficult situations. These stories provide a visual and narrative framework for learning about social interactions.

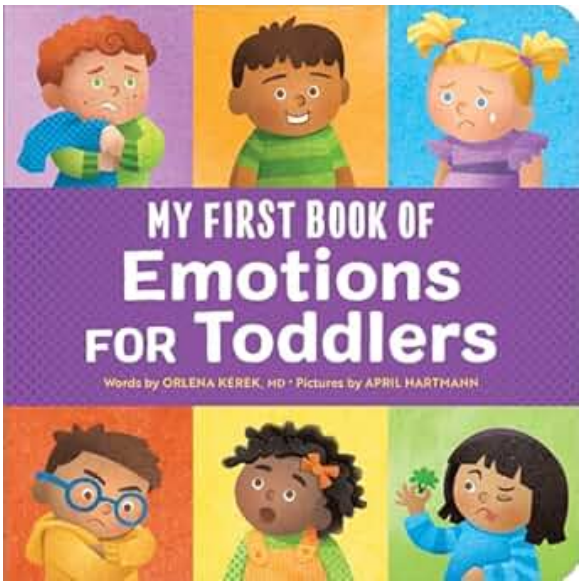


Figure 1.3.21: Emotion book.

Group Activities and Social Interaction

Circle Time Discussions

Use circle time to introduce and discuss different concepts, such as feelings, what makes a good friend, or how we can help each other. This encourages social interaction and builds an early understanding of social studies concepts.

Collaborative Art and Building

Engage toddlers in group art projects or block-building activities that require cooperation, problem-solving, and the use of social skills to create something together.



Figure 1.3.22: Building activity.

Connecting with Nature

Outdoor Exploration

Take toddlers outside to explore nature and observe the environment around them. Discuss concepts like the importance of trees, animals, and the seasons, helping toddlers understand their relationship to the natural world.

Gardening

Planting a garden or caring for plants teaches toddlers about growth, responsibility, and the concept of nurturing the environment.



Figure 1.3.23: Gardening activity.

Understanding the Concept of Helping Others

Charitable Acts

Teach toddlers about kindness and helping others by involving them in simple acts of kindness, such as donating old clothes or toys. This can be linked to social studies by showing how individuals contribute to the well-being of others.

Community Projects

Involve toddlers in simple community projects, like cleaning up a local park or planting flowers. These activities introduce them to the idea of working together to improve the community.

By incorporating social studies concepts into everyday routines, toddler teachers can help young children build foundational knowledge about society, their role in it, and the world around them, while also supporting social, emotional, and cognitive development. These early experiences foster empathy, cooperation, and a greater understanding of diversity and community.



Figure 1.3.24: Flower activity.

Infants

Infant teachers can incorporate social studies into the daily routine in developmentally appropriate ways by focusing on the foundation of social and cultural understanding, relationships, and community. While infants are not yet developmentally ready for complex social studies concepts, they can begin to build a sense of self, relationships with others, and an awareness of the world around them.

Infant Social Studies Vignette

Integrating Social Studies into the Infant Day

It's a calm morning at Bumblebee Infant Care, and the infants are gathered on soft mats in their cozy play area with their caregiver, Ms. Ana. The room is filled with gentle music, and the soft sounds of a lullaby play in the background as the infants explore their surroundings. Today's focus is on introducing the concept of "People Who Care for Us" through simple, interactive experiences.

Ms. Ana begins the day by sitting with the infants in a circle, holding a soft, colorful puppet in the shape of a friendly "nurse." She softly says, "This is Nurse Nelly. Nurse Nelly helps take care of us when we're not feeling well." As she gently moves the puppet, she makes eye contact with each baby, smiling and softly saying, "Nurse Nelly says 'Hello!'" Some infants giggle, while others reach out to touch the puppet's soft fabric.

Ms. Ana then introduces a soft baby doll, gently rocking it and saying, "This is Baby Bella. Baby Bella needs help from people who love her." She carefully guides the doll's hands to wave at the infants, encouraging them to watch as she helps the doll "wave" to them. "Can you wave to Baby Bella?" Ms. Ana gently prompts. A few babies begin to mimic the waving motion, smiling as they reach out.

As the day continues, Ms. Ana introduces another activity. She picks up a soft picture board book showing smiling faces of various caregivers—mothers, fathers, and other familiar adults in the infants' lives. She points to each picture and says, "This is Mommy. She loves to hug you," and then to the next face, "This is Daddy. He helps you when you need a bottle." She softly touches each infant's hand, encouraging them to interact with the pictures. Some babies reach out to touch the book, while others watch intently, responding to Ms. Ana's calm, soothing voice.

After the story, Ms. Ana gently lays a few soft, child-safe toys in front of each infant. "These are our toys, but we need people to help take care of them," she explains while helping the infants pick up their toys, guiding their hands to feel the textures and shapes. "Can you touch the soft teddy bear? Can you hold the rattle?"

During tummy time, Ms. Ana places a colorful mirror in front of the infants. She talks to them as they explore their reflection: “Look! Who do we see? That’s you! You’re growing big and strong, just like the people who take care of you.” She smiles warmly as the infants gaze curiously at their own reflections, some reaching out to touch the mirror.

Throughout the day, as Ms. Ana changes diapers, feeds bottles, and provides comfort, she continues to talk softly about how the people around the infants—parents, caregivers, and teachers—help and care for them. She uses gentle, reassuring phrases like “I’m here to help you” and “You are safe and loved,” reinforcing the connection between the infants and the adults who care for them.

As the babies wind down for nap time, Ms. Ana softly hums a lullaby and whispers, “You’re in good hands. The people around you care for you very much.” The infants, nestled in their blankets, drift off to sleep feeling secure and surrounded by care.

Through simple interactions, soothing words, and gentle movements, social studies is integrated into the infant day by introducing them to the concepts of people who care for them, fostering a sense of safety and connection in their world.

Integrating Social Studies for Infants

Explore additional strategies for integrating social studies learning into the daily experiences and routines of infants.

Building Relationships

Family and Caregiver Connections

Encourage bonding between infants and their caregivers. This supports the foundation for understanding relationships and social interactions. Teachers can involve family photos or familiar objects to help infants recognize people and places important to them.



Figure 1.3.25: Connecting with infants.

Acknowledging Diverse Families

Family Diversity

Show infants images or dolls representing diverse families, and talk about family structures (e.g., single-parent families, extended families, different cultural traditions) in simple terms. This helps them begin to recognize and respect diversity.

Picture Boards

Ask families for family pictures. Display the pictures at the eye level of the infants. Talk about each child's family when a child is at the board, pointing to the pictures. Discuss the people in the pictures and their names.



Figure 1.3.26: Photograph activity.

Community Awareness

Start with the Child

Infants understand their immediate environment and what is closest to them. Describe the areas they are in.

Environment Exploration

Introduce infants to different parts of the classroom or outdoor environments (e.g., play area, eating space, or quiet area) and describe how each space is used.

Community Roles

You can begin introducing basic concepts of community by talking about the roles of people around them—teachers, parents, or older children.



Figure 1.3.27: Play space for infants.

Social Interactions and Emotions

Emotion Recognition

Use simple books, songs, or activities to help infants start recognizing and naming emotions like happy, sad, or surprised. Songs such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" are good for acknowledging emotional states and social cues.



Figure 1.3.28: Infant emotions.

Simple Social Concepts

Sharing and Taking Turns

Encourage interactions where infants can learn about sharing and interacting with peers, such as offering toys to each other, even if just briefly. This fosters social skills like cooperation and understanding others' feelings.

Turn Taking During Conversations

From 2 months of age, babies start taking turns in vocalizations. Caregivers can start talking to a child and wait for their vocalization response. If the child initiates an interaction by making sounds, caregivers can respond and then once again wait for a return vocalization from the infant.



Figure 1.3.29: Playing ball.

Cultural Awareness Through Songs and Stories

Songs and Rhymes

Play music and sing simple songs from different cultures to introduce diversity in a fun, engaging way. Rhymes and stories that reflect various cultural traditions or community activities can be part of the classroom experience, even in the earliest years. Sing traditional nursery rhymes and songs. Ask families to share rhymes and songs from their culture and sing them with the children.



Figure 1.3.30: Music activity.

Sensory Exploration

Textures and Objects

Infants can explore objects from different cultures (such as toys, textiles, or musical instruments) during sensory play, which encourages curiosity about the world. Through touch and exploration, they begin to build an understanding of differences.

Visit Website

Visit the Inspire My Play website to download a free book about sensory play.

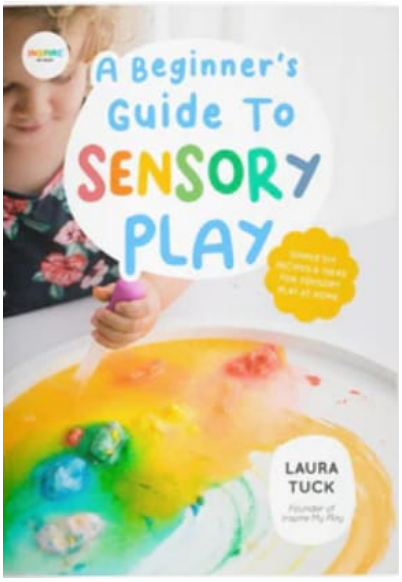


Figure 1.3.31: Sensory play book.

Group Activities and Social Learning

Interactive Play

In group play settings, even for infants, encourage sharing, taking turns with toys, and participating in social games. Simple group activities, such as playing with blocks together, help them develop early cooperative skills and a sense of group belonging.



Figure 1.3.32: Playing together.

Daily Routines as Social Practices

Routine Activities

Use daily routines to explain social concepts, like taking care of oneself, washing hands, or saying "please" and "thank you." These activities provide early lessons in social etiquette and self-care, contributing to a child's understanding of their place in the community.

Sign Language

You may also teach simple signs to go along with daily routines ("Thank You", "Please", "All Done", "Milk", etc.)



Figure 1.3.33: Cleaning routine.

Simple Books with Social Themes

Interactive Books

Read books that feature characters from diverse backgrounds, families, or communities. Choose simple books with pictures that represent different people, and use the stories as conversation starters to help infants make basic connections to the world around them.

By incorporating social studies through these activities, infant teachers help foster early social awareness, community engagement, and emotional development, laying the foundation for more complex social studies concepts as children grow.

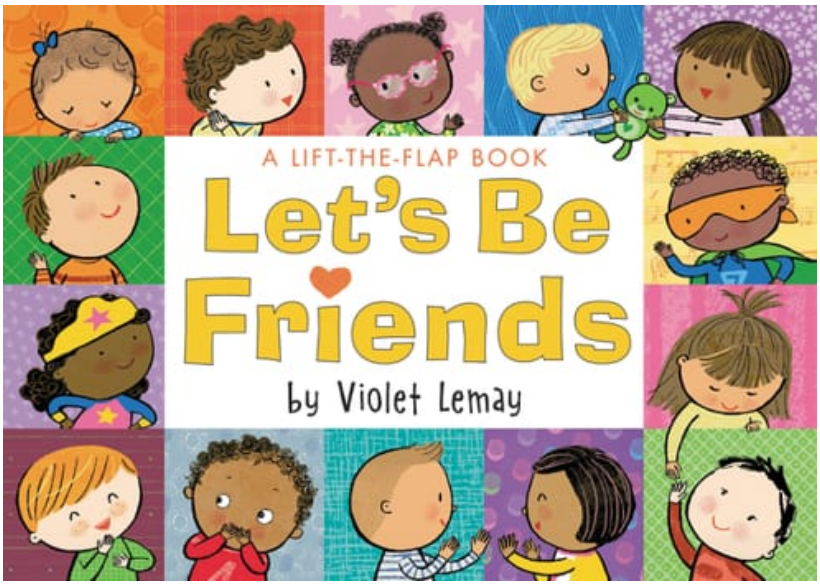


Figure 1.3.34: Friend book.

Conclusion

Incorporating social studies into the daily experiences of preschoolers, toddlers, and infants helps young children develop a foundational understanding of the world around them.

For Preschoolers

This involves exploring community roles, discussing diversity, and encouraging active participation in real-world experiences.

For Toddlers

Social studies comes to life through simple concepts like the roles of helpers in their community, fostering empathy and understanding through role-play.

For Infants

Although their comprehension is limited, exposure to caring adults, familiar faces, and gentle introductions to the people who help and nurture them creates a sense of safety and trust.

Across all age groups, integrating social studies promotes a sense of connection to others and the community. This sets the stage for children to develop respect, understanding, and a positive sense of belonging in the world around them.

References

This page is based on:

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- OpenAI. (2024). *How do toddler teachers incorporate social studies into the day?* Retrieved December 12, 2024, from [ChatGPT]
- OpenAI. (2024). *How do infant teachers incorporate social studies into the day?* Retrieved December 12, 2024, from [ChatGPT].

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1.4: Incorporating Art into Daily Routines

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the various ways Art can be integrated into daily routines.

Introduction to Integrating Art into Daily Routines

Art concepts and experiences can seamlessly blend into various parts of the day for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants. Integrating art into daily routines not only fosters creativity but also supports cognitive, emotional, and social development. This section explores how art can be incorporated into everyday activities, with ideas specifically tailored for different age groups. Discover ways to integrate art into morning routines, circle time, transitions, snacks, mealtimes, and many other parts of the day, such as story and playtime. By embedding art into daily routines, educators can create a vibrant and stimulating environment that nurtures the holistic development of young children.



Figure 1.4.1: Art activity.

Preschoolers

Preschool teachers craft experiences throughout the day to help children develop an understanding of art concepts, integrating these lessons beyond just designated art time. By weaving art into various activities, teachers create a rich, immersive learning environment. Read the vignette below to explore how one teacher creates opportunities for learning in art during center time, storytime, free choice time, and the end-of-day transition.

Preschool Art Vignette

The preschool classroom buzzes with morning energy as children settle in. At the art station, Miss Emily sets out trays of watercolors and thick paper. "**Good morning, artists!**" she greets. "**Today, you can paint how you feel. What colors match your mood?**"

Lena picks up a bright yellow brush. "**I'm happy!**" she declares, swirling sunshine across her paper. Nearby, Jordan carefully mixes blue and red. "**I'm making purple!**" he announces proudly.

Later in the morning, as the class transitions from outdoor play, Mr. Luis invites the children to the easel. "**Who wants to help paint a class mural about what we saw outside?"** he asks. Sofia excitedly grabs a green brush. "**I'll make the trees!**" Isaiah dabs brown onto the paper. "**I'm making the playground!**"

During storytime, Miss Emily introduces a book about Vincent van Gogh. "**Look at these swirly lines!**" she says, pointing to *The Starry Night*. "**After our story, we'll use oil pastels to make our own swirling skies!**" The children listen intently, eager to create.

In the afternoon, during free choice time, the art table transforms into a sculpture station. Mr. Luis sets out playdough, popsicle sticks, and pipe cleaners. "What can you build today?" he asks. Mia carefully presses sticks into her playdough. "**It's a castle!**" she beams.

As the day winds down, Miss Emily leads the children in a reflection. "**Let's share something we made today.**" The children take turns holding up their artwork, beaming with pride. Their creations—bold, colorful, and unique—tell the story of a day filled with imagination, self-expression, and creativity.

Now let's explore several practical and creative ideas for preschool teachers to seamlessly integrate art into daily routines. These suggestions will enhance children's artistic exploration and expression throughout the day, making art a natural and engaging part of their everyday experiences.

Morning Routines

Creative Sign-In

Use art-based sign-in activities, such as having children trace or decorate their names on a sign-in sheet using crayons or markers.

Morning Message Art

Combine literacy and art by illustrating the morning message with symbols or small drawings, and invite children to add their ideas.

Feelings Board

Children sign in by drawing a picture of how they feel and place it on the attendance board.



Figure 1.4.2: Name recognition activity.

Circle Time

Collaborative Mural

Start a collaborative mural where children can add elements each day, such as a weather-themed or seasonal artwork that evolves over time.

Visual Representation of Feelings

Use art to express emotions during morning discussions. For example, children can choose or draw a face on a feelings chart.



Figure 1.4.3: Feelings chart.

Transitions

Quick Drawing Activities

During transitions, provide small prompts like “draw a line to match colors,” or “sketch something you love," or "draw a line to the sky."

Draw and Move

Have children draw a line, squiggle, or simple doodle, then move to the next station or activity while mimicking what they drew (e.g., walk like a squiggly line).

Interactive Art Songs

Incorporate finger-painting movements or actions into transition songs, mimicking artistic gestures.



Figure 1.4.4: Walk the line activity.

Snack and Mealtime

Edible Art

Use food items to create art before eating, like arranging fruits or vegetables to make a "face" or decorating cookies with edible markers.

Placemat Art

Let children create and laminate personalized placemats they can use daily during snack time.



Figure 1.4.5: Food art activity.

Storytime

Illustration Extensions

After reading a story, ask children to create their interpretation of a favorite scene or character through drawing or painting.

Storytelling Through Art

Provide materials for children to create puppets or props related to the story to use in retelling.



Figure 1.4.6: Finger puppet activity.

Centers and Playtime

Rotating Art Station

Set up an art station with rotating materials, like watercolors one day and clay the next, allowing children to explore various mediums.

Art in Dramatic Play

Incorporate art into role-play activities, such as making menus for a pretend restaurant or designing tickets for a “movie theater.”



Figure 1.4.7: Menu-creating activity.

Art and Sensory Activities

Nature Art

Collect leaves, flowers, or stones during outdoor time and use them in art projects, such as making leaf rubbings or nature collages.

Recycled Art

Encourage children to use recycled materials, like bottle caps or cardboard, to create sculptures or mosaics.



Figure 1.4.8: Making art by rubbing leaves.

Music and Movement

Art Inspired by Music

Play music and invite children to draw or paint what the music makes them feel or imagine.

Dancing Art

Use long strips of paper and have children dance with paint-covered feet or use ribbons dipped in paint to create movement-inspired art.



Figure 1.4.9: Painting and music activity.

Learning Activities

Process Art

Focus on the creative process rather than the outcome. Provide open-ended prompts like "What can you make with these shapes and colors?"

Integrated Learning

Incorporate art into other subjects, like drawing shapes during math lessons or painting what plants need to grow during science discussions.

Naptime

Calm Art Projects

Before nap time, offer calming art activities, such as coloring mandalas or painting with water on chalkboards.

Art as Background

Play calming instrumental music and display children's artwork around the room to create a soothing environment.

End-of-Day Routines

Reflection Art

Invite children to draw their favorite part of the day as a way to reflect and share.

Take-Home Projects

Set up a quick art activity, like making a postcard or small craft, for families as part of their departure routine.

Cultural and Seasonal Connections

Seasonal Art Projects

Encourage children to create art based on seasonal themes, such as snowflakes in winter or flowers in spring.

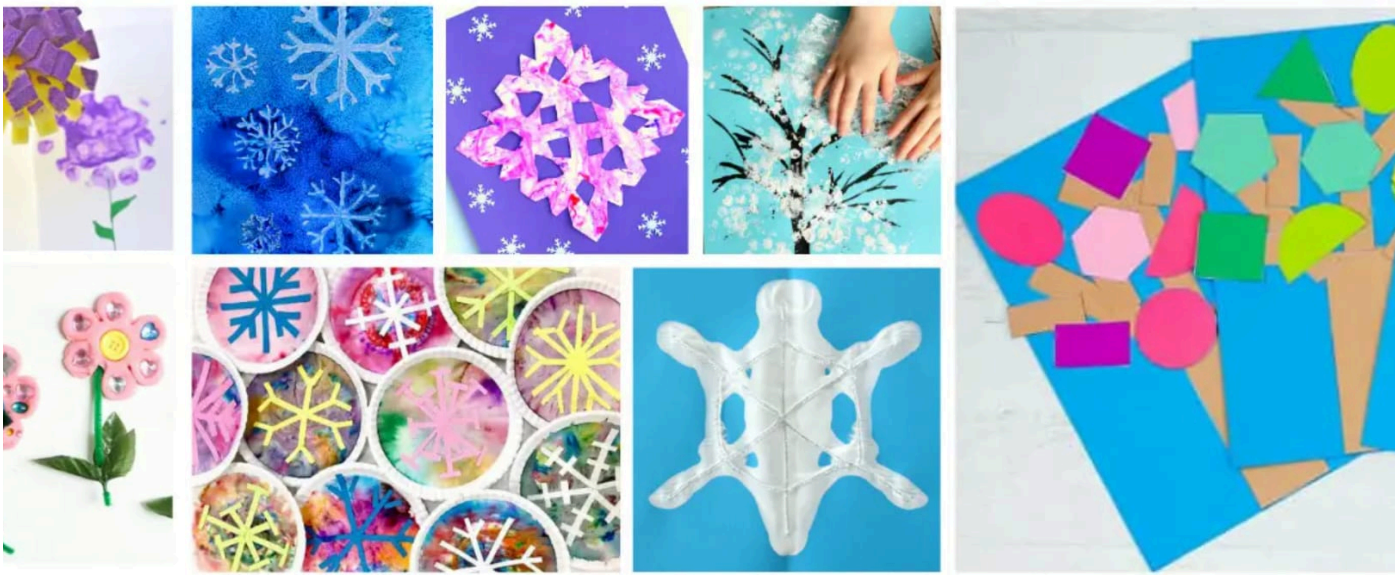


Figure 1.4.10: Art themes of flowers, snowflakes, and trees.

Cultural Crafts

Celebrate diversity by introducing art projects inspired by global traditions, like making rangoli patterns for Diwali or paper fans for Lunar New Year.



Figure 1.4.11: Art projects inspired by cultures

Special Activities

Collaborative Art

Create large group projects, like a class quilt or mosaic, that foster teamwork and creativity.

Art Show

Organize a mini art gallery or show where children display their work for peers and families to see.

Toddlers



Figure 1.4.12:Toddler painting activity.

Toddler Art Vignette

The toddler classroom hums with morning activity as little hands explore baskets of colorful scarves and soft blocks. At a low table, Miss Sarah sets out chunky crayons and large sheets of paper. “Good morning, artists!” she says with a smile. “Let’s make some morning marks!”Emma eagerly grabs a red crayon and scribbles big loops across her paper. Liam watches for a moment before tentatively pressing a blue crayon to the page, his tiny fingers gripping it tightly. “Blue!” he exclaims. “Yes, blue!” Miss Sarah responds. “You’re making beautiful blue lines.”Later in the morning, after snack time, Mr. Ben rolls out a long sheet of butcher paper on the floor. “Let’s make a shape painting!” he announces. He squirts small blobs of paint onto the paper and hands the toddlers sponges and rollers. “Squish, squish!” he says, pressing a sponge down. The toddlers giggle and eagerly pat, roll, and spread the paint with their hands and the sponges, leaving colorful hand prints across the paper. “Look at all these shapes!” Mr. Ben marvels. During outdoor play, Miss Sarah brings out sidewalk chalk. “Who wants to draw on the ground?” she asks. Noah picks up a thick yellow chalk stick and drags it across the pavement. “Sun!” he says proudly. “That’s right, Noah! You made a bright sun,” Miss Sarah replies. Mia claps her hands, watching the dust from her pink chalk puff into the air. As the day winds down, the toddlers gather for a calming story. Miss Sarah brings out a special surprise—warm lavender-scented playdough. “Let’s squish and roll while we listen,” she says softly. Little hands press and mold the dough while their eyes grow heavy with sleepiness. From morning scribbles to messy painting and sensory play, art weaves its way through the toddlers’ day, sparking joy, curiosity, and creativity. After exploring the introduction to toddler art and the vignette, let's delve into several practical and creative ideas for incorporating art into a toddler’s day. These suggestions will help seamlessly integrate artistic activities into daily routines, fostering creativity and exploration in young children. From morning scribbles to messy painting and sensory play, art weaves its way through the toddlers’ day, sparking joy, curiosity, and creativity.

Simple Art Projects

Finger Painting

Provide non-toxic, washable paints for toddlers to explore finger painting. This helps develop fine motor skills and allows for self-expression.

Paper Collage

Offer different types of paper (e.g., construction paper, tissue paper, or magazine cut-outs) and glue sticks so toddlers can practice pasting and arranging materials, fostering creativity and hand-eye coordination.

Drawing with Crayons or Markers

Give toddlers crayons, markers, or colored pencils and let them draw freely. This activity encourages fine motor skills, creativity, and visual expression.



Figure 1.4.13: Finger-painting activity.

Sensory Art Activities

Texture Exploration

Incorporate textured materials like fabric swatches, sandpaper, cotton balls, or fabric to create art projects. Toddlers will enjoy the sensory experience and can practice touch while creating their artwork.

Nature Art

Collect leaves, flowers, or sticks from outside and allow toddlers to create art using natural materials. This can promote an appreciation for nature and stimulate creativity.



Figure 1.4.14: Walking on various textures.

Process-Oriented Art

Exploration Over Outcome

Emphasize the process of creating art rather than focusing on the final product. Encourage toddlers to explore colors, shapes, and textures without worrying about perfection. This approach fosters creativity and allows toddlers to experience the joy of art.

Free Painting or Drawing

Offer large sheets of paper where toddlers can freely paint or draw, allowing them to explore their creativity at their own pace without any specific guidelines.

Art and Storytelling

Art as Storytelling

Encourage toddlers to create art based on a story, such as drawing scenes from a favorite book or their interpretation of a story. This can help develop both creative and cognitive skills.

Draw or Paint Their Emotions

Provide opportunities for toddlers to express emotions through art. For instance, after a story or a group activity, they can draw how they felt, helping them develop emotional awareness and communication.



Figure 1.4.15: Emotional art activity.

Group Art Activities

Collaborative Mural

Set up a large piece of paper or fabric on the wall or floor and invite toddlers to contribute to a group mural or artwork. This can help foster social skills, teamwork, and a sense of community.

Group Collages

Create a group collage with various materials, like fabric, buttons, or paper scraps. This allows toddlers to contribute individual pieces to a larger project, which promotes collaboration and the development of fine motor skills.

Incorporating Art into Other Areas of Learning

Art for Cognitive Development

Introduce toddlers to basic shapes, colors, and patterns through art activities. For example, they can make collages with different shapes or practice sorting colored pieces of paper.

Art and Language Development

Encourage toddlers to describe their art as they create it. This helps with language development as they learn to express themselves verbally while they engage in creative processes.



Figure 1.4.16: Art with shapes.

Art with Music

Art and Music Integration

Combine art and music by having toddlers listen to different types of music and then create artwork inspired by the sounds. For example, they could paint or draw while listening to classical music, jazz, or nature sounds, which can stimulate both their creativity and emotional expression.

Dancing and Drawing

Provide large sheets of paper and allow toddlers to move around and dance to music while simultaneously drawing or painting. This helps develop gross motor skills while connecting movement with creativity.

Clay and Playdough Activities

Clay Sculpture

Allow toddlers to explore sculpting with soft modeling clay or playdough. This activity supports fine motor development and helps toddlers understand shape and form.

Stamping with Clay

Provide toddler-friendly tools to make impressions or stamps in playdough or clay, which helps develop hand strength and hand-eye coordination.



Figure 1.4.17: Playdough activity.

Art for Emotional Expression

Art for Calming

Offer toddlers a quiet art corner with calming colors, paper, and crayons or markers where they can retreat to express themselves through drawing or coloring when they need a moment of quiet or emotional release.

Emotion Faces

Encourage toddlers to create faces that represent different emotions. This can help them identify and express their own feelings in a non-verbal way.

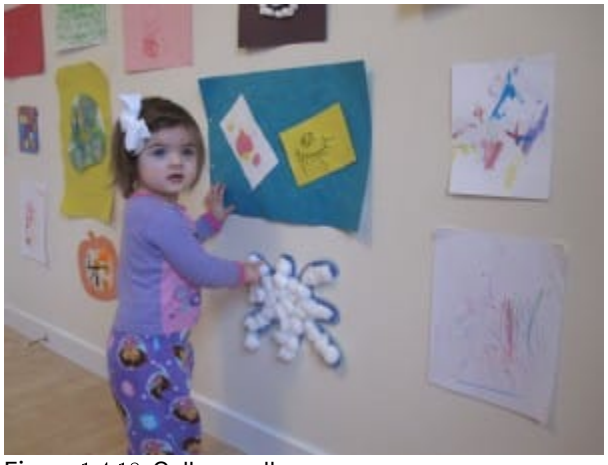


Figure 1.4.18: Gallery wall.

Displaying and Celebrating Art

Art Gallery

Create an art display area where toddlers' creations are displayed for the class to view. This helps toddlers feel proud of their work and teaches them the value of their creative expressions.

Parents Involvement

Send home artwork with toddlers or host an "art show" for families, allowing parents to appreciate and celebrate their child's creative expression.

Infants



Figure 1.4.19: Infant finger painting in high chair.

Infant Art Vignette

Soft morning light filters through the infant room as Miss Avery kneels beside a low table, setting out a shallow tray of red and yellow paint. "Who's ready for some colorful fun?" she coos, smiling at the wiggling babies on the soft play mat. She lifts baby Leo into her lap, guiding his tiny hand onto a piece of sturdy cardstock inside a ziplock bag filled with paint. As he pats and squeezes, the colors swirl together. "Look at that! You're making orange!" Miss Avery exclaims. Leo babbles and smacks the bag again, delighting in the squishy sensation. Nearby, Mr. Daniel sits with Mia in a high chair, offering her a chunky, non-toxic crayon. She grips it in her small fist, tapping it on the paper before dragging it across in a wobbly line. "You're making marks, Mia!" Mr. Daniel praises, watching as she giggles and drops the crayon, only to reach for another. Later, during tummy time, Miss Avery places a large piece of contact paper sticky-side up on the floor, scattering lightweight tissue paper squares across it. Curious little hands reach out, pressing and peeling the colorful pieces. "Feel that sticky surface? You're making your own masterpiece!" she says warmly. After lunch, as soft music plays, the infants gather for a sensory painting experience. Mr. Daniel gently dips a sponge into cool, edible yogurt paint and dabs it onto Liam's fingertips. Liam smears it across his tray, giggling at the slippery texture. "So smooth and cold!" Mr. Daniel narrates, encouraging him to explore. As the day winds down, Miss Avery hangs up the babies' creations at eye level. "Look at the art you made today!" she says, pointing to the bright swirls and hand prints. A few infants reach toward their artwork, cooing in recognition. Through simple, sensory-rich experiences, art becomes a joyful part of the infants' daily routine, fostering curiosity, exploration, and self-expression from their very first strokes.

Building on the introduction to infant art and the vignette, here are several practical and creative ideas for incorporating art into an infant's day. These suggestions will help seamlessly integrate artistic activities into daily routines, fostering early creativity and sensory exploration.

Sensory Art Experiences

Finger Painting

Allow infants to explore finger paints with their hands, providing a tactile and visual experience. Use large sheets of paper or safe, non-toxic materials for infants to explore colors and textures.

Texture Exploration

Provide a variety of textured materials (e.g., fabric, sponges, bubble wrap) for infants to feel and manipulate. This encourages sensory development and creativity.



Figure 1.4.19: Infant finger painting activity.

Color Exploration

Colored Water Play

Fill shallow bins with colored water for infants to splash and play in. Use safe, child-friendly colored water or non-toxic dyes for a sensory experience.

Color Mixing

For older infants, simple activities such as mixing colors with sponges or brushes can introduce them to the concept of color blending.



Figure 1.4.20: Colored water activity.

Art with Natural Materials

Nature Collages

Take infants outside to explore natural materials like leaves, flowers, and twigs. They can touch, feel, and even stick some items to large sheets of paper with the help of the teacher.

Nature Prints

Use leaves or flowers to create simple prints by placing them under paper and rubbing a crayon or chalk over them, introducing textures and patterns to infants.



Figure 1.4.21: Nature collage activity.

Sensory Art with Music

Art and Music Combination

Play different types of music while infants explore art materials. The rhythm of the music can encourage movement or expression with their hands or tools. For example, rhythmic music could inspire them to tap or move their hands in a flowing motion on paper.

Scribbling and Drawing

Crayon or Marker Scribbling

Even infants as young as six months old can benefit from safe, non-toxic crayons or markers. Encourage scribbling, which helps develop hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. Provide large sheets of butcher paper or sticky paper for infants to freely scribble or explore with different writing instruments.



Figure 1.4.22: Scribbling activity.

Stamping and Printing

Stamp Pads or Stamps

Use soft stamp pads with large, safe stamps for infants to press onto paper, allowing them to explore shapes and colors.

Bubble Wrap Printing

Paint bubble wrap and let infants press it onto paper to create bubble prints, giving them both sensory and visual stimulation.

Playdough or Clay Exploration

Soft Playdough

Provide soft, non-toxic playdough for infants to squish, roll, or pinch. This promotes hand strength and fine motor skills, as well as tactile exploration.

Clay or Modeling Materials

Use soft modeling clay to allow infants to manipulate shapes and feel different textures.

Group Art Activities

Collaborative Art

While infants are still developing social skills, teachers can guide them in group activities like holding hands to color a large piece of paper together. This fosters social interaction and teamwork.

Art Through Storytelling

Storybooks with Art Themes

Incorporate art-related books that encourage infants to explore shapes, colors, and textures through simple illustrations or tactile features.

Interactive Art Stories

Read a story that includes art elements and pause to let infants engage with textures or illustrations on the pages, connecting the narrative to art exploration.

Creating Art with Everyday Objects

Sponges, Brushes, and Household Items

Use everyday items like sponges, cotton balls, and brushes to make art. This introduces infants to different tools and textures.

Tape or Stickers

Let infants play with soft, removable stickers or pieces of tape to tear, stick, or peel, enhancing their dexterity and coordination.



Figure 1.4.23: Tape activity.

Incorporating art into an infant's daily routine allows them to engage with their environment, express themselves, and develop essential sensory, cognitive, and fine motor skills in a fun and creative manner. These activities provide a rich sensory experience that supports overall development and encourages exploration. It's important to remember that art for infants is process-oriented rather than product-oriented. The focus should be on the experience and exploration, rather than the final outcome. This approach fosters creativity, curiosity, and a love for artistic expression from an early age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating art into the daily routines of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers not only fosters creativity but also supports the development of essential cognitive, motor, and social skills. For infants, art experiences are often sensory-based, helping them explore textures, colors, and shapes through simple, safe materials. Toddlers, with their growing curiosity and emerging fine motor skills, engage in more hands-on art activities, experimenting with tools and creating expressive designs. Preschoolers take these experiences further, using art to communicate ideas, explore cultural themes, and develop problem-solving skills. By weaving art into the fabric of their day, teachers create a rich, dynamic environment where children of all ages can develop a sense of self-expression, confidence, and connection to the world around them.

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1.5: Incorporating Music into Daily Routines

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the various ways Music can be integrated into daily routines.

Introduction to Integrating Music into Daily Routines

Music is a powerful tool that can enrich the daily routines of preschoolers, toddlers, and infants. It supports various aspects of development, including language, emotional regulation, motor skills, and social interaction. This chapter explores practical strategies for integrating music into everyday activities, making learning engaging and enjoyable for young children. By incorporating music into daily routines, educators can create a dynamic and interactive environment that fosters holistic development and a lifelong appreciation for music.

Below, you will explore many ideas for incorporating music into various times of the day for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants. Some of the songs mentioned in the reading include a link to a video of the song.

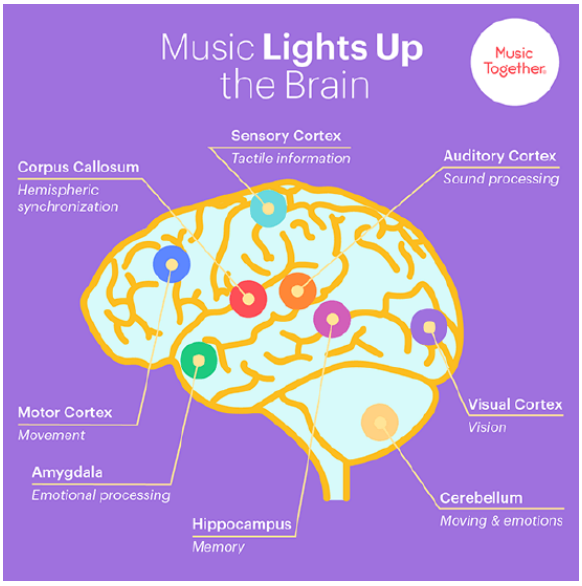


Figure 1.5.1: The effect of music on the brain





Figure 1.5.2: Music play

Preschoolers

Preschool teachers can very easily integrate music into their daily routines with the children. Read the vignette below to see how one teacher uses music in the classroom at various times of the day.

Preschool Music Vignette

The preschool classroom hums with the energy of a new day as children trickle in, hanging up backpacks and greeting friends. Miss Tasha strums her ukulele softly, filling the room with a familiar tune. "Good morning, everyone! Let's sing our welcome song!" she says cheerfully.

> The children gather on the rug as Miss Tasha begins:
> "*Hello, hello, how are you?*
> *Hello, hello, I'm glad to see you!*"

The children sway and clap along, some singing the words while others chime in with giggles and waves.

Later in the morning, as the class transitions to clean-up time, Mr. Devin presses play on a lively song about tidying up.

> "Listen! The music tells us it's time to clean!" he announces.
>
> The children start putting away toys, matching their movements to the rhythm.
>
> "Blocks in the bin, tap, tap, tap!" he sings, and a few children echo him as they place blocks in the basket.

During outdoor play, Miss Tasha leads a game of *Freeze Dance*.

> She plays an upbeat song on the speaker, and the children twirl, hop, and wiggle.
>
> When the music stops, they freeze in funny poses, erupting into laughter before starting again.

At lunch, a quiet lullaby plays in the background, helping to set a calm mood.

> “Soft music helps our bodies slow down while we eat,” Mr. Devin says, modeling deep breaths.
>
> A few children instinctively sway as they munch on their sandwiches.
>
> ---
>
> **As the day winds down, Miss Tasha gathers the children on the rug for their goodbye song. She strums the ukulele again, and the children join in.**
>
> “It's time to go, we had fun today,
>
> We'll see each other another day!"
>
> **One by one, they wave goodbye, their voices soft and happy, carrying the day’s music home with them.**

Here are additional ideas for preschool teachers to incorporate music into daily routines, making learning engaging and supporting children's development:

Use Simple Songs to Guide Children Through Transitions

Morning Arrival

Sing a greeting song like “Good Morning to You.”

Clean-Up Time

Use songs like “Clean Up, Clean Up, Everybody Everywhere” or "Clean Up the Room", to signal tidying.

Lining up or Moving Locations

Sing a marching or rhythm-based song. "The Line Up Song" or "Let's March".

Include Music as a Central Part of Circle Time

- **Welcome or Name Recognition Songs**: Sing welcome or name recognition songs to promote social skills, such as "Good Morning Songs."
- **Calendar, Weather, or Theme Songs:** Incorporate songs about the calendar, weather, or themes (e.g., seasons or animals). Jack Hartman has songs about each month and about seasons.
  - "January", "It's the Season of Winter"
  - "March", "It's the Season of Spring"
  - "June", "Have Fun This Summer"
  - "September", "Let's Have Fall Fun"
- **Musical Instruments:** Use musical instruments like tambourines, maracas, or rhythm sticks during group songs.



Figure 1.5.3: Musical instrument play

Movement and Gross Motor Development

Combine Music with Movement Activities

- **Encourage Physical Activity**: Play songs like "The Hokey Pokey" or "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" to encourage physical activity.
- **Dance Parties or Movement Breaks**: Use music for dance parties or movement breaks during the day.
- **Explore Cultural Dances**: Explore cultural dances or movements to introduce diversity.



Figure 1.5.4: Dancing play.

Storytime Songs

Pair Songs with Books or Create Musical Story Experiences

- **Repetitive Refrains**: Sing repetitive refrains in books like *The Wheels on the Bus* or *If You're Happy and You Know It*.

- **Instrumental Sound Effects**: Incorporate instrumental sound effects to match story elements such as "Tiptoe Joe" or "The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid of Anything"

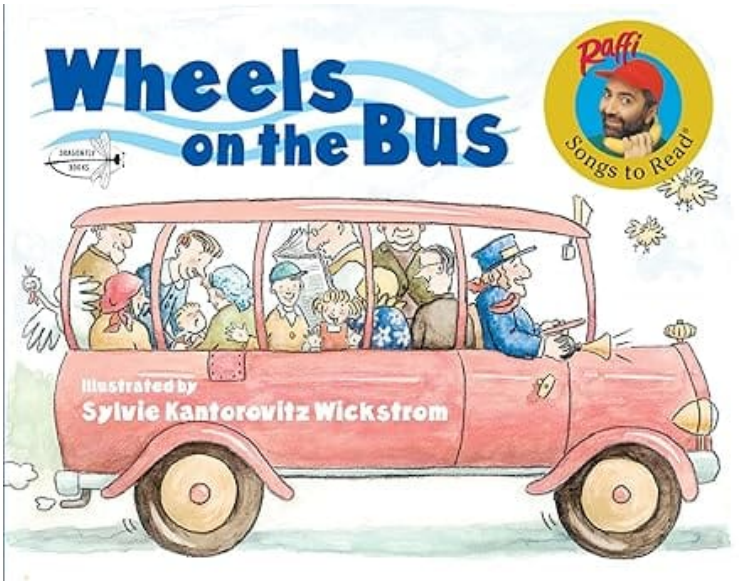


Figure 1.5.5: Music-related book.

Naptime

Use Calming Music to Help Children Relax

- **Instrumental Lullabies or Nature Sounds**: Play soft, instrumental lullabies or nature sounds during naptime. Relaxing Deep Sleep Music for Rest Time
- **Self-Soothing**: Encourage children to hum or sing quietly to self-soothe before rest.

Thematic Learning

Introduce Songs Related to the Classroom Theme

- **Animals Unit**: Sing songs like “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” or “Baby Shark.”
- **Transportation Unit**: Use songs like “Down by the Station.”

Exploring Musical Instruments

Provide Opportunities to Explore Simple Instruments

- **Create Rhythm Patterns**: Use drums, tambourines, or shakers to create rhythm patterns.
- **Homemade Instruments**: Explore homemade instruments, like rubber band guitars or tissue box drums.
- **Free Play**: Allow free play with instruments during centers.



Figure 1.5.6: Instruments for children.

Cultural Exploration

Introduce Music from Different Cultures

- **Folk Songs and Traditional Music**: Play recordings of folk songs or traditional music from various countries.
- **Simple Songs and Dances**: Teach children simple songs or dances from different parts of the world to celebrate diversity.

Snack and Mealtime Songs

Sing songs about food or eating habits during snack time:

- **Healthy Eating Songs**: Use songs like "I'm a Little Teapot" with new lyrics about healthy eating.
- **Gratitude Songs**: Sing a thank-you or gratitude song before meals. "Thank you, All Around the World"



Figure 1.5.7: Thank you song.

Emotional Expression

Use Music to Help Children Express Emotions

- **Songs About Feelings**: Sing songs about feelings (e.g., “If You’re Happy and You Know It” with new emotions like sad, mad, or excited).
- **Calm Corner**: Use music to create a “calm corner” where children can relax or process emotions.

Music in Outdoor Play

Take Music Outdoors

- **Sing While Playing**: Sing while swinging or playing games like “Ring Around the Rosie.”
- **Portable Instruments**: Provide portable instruments or play music for free movement and dance outside.
- **Music Wall or Hanging Music Station**: Try creating a Music Wall or a Hanging Music Station.



Figure 1.5.8: Music play areas.

Create a Music Center

Dedicate a Classroom Space for Musical Exploration

- **Stock with Instruments**: Include instruments, sheet music, and headphones for independent or group play.
- **Rotate Materials**: Rotate materials to keep children interested and engaged.
- **Teach Songs in Group Time**: Teach the children the songs in group time and provide song charts with pictures so they can sing the songs themselves.
- **Provide Flannelboards and Props**: Offer flannelboards and props for the children to play with while they sing the songs.



Figure 1.5.9: Music center.

Celebrate Special Events

Incorporate music into celebrations:

- Sing birthday songs or create a special “Happy Birthday March.”
- Use music for holiday events or classroom parties, such as carols or festive dances.

Teacher-Made Songs

Create simple, custom songs with children’s names or specific learning goals:

- Sing about daily routines, classroom rules, or topics like counting and the alphabet.
- Use familiar tunes like “Twinkle, Twinkle” or “Frère Jacques” with new lyrics.

Incorporating music in these ways makes routines smoother, builds skills across multiple domains, and fosters a joyful classroom atmosphere.

Toddlers

Toddler teachers can incorporate music into the daily routine in various ways to support toddlers' developmental milestones, including language development, emotional regulation, and motor skills. Music is engaging for toddlers and provides a multisensory experience that stimulates both their auditory and physical development. Read the vignette below to explore how music engages the children and creates opportunities to further their development.

Toddler Music Vignette

The morning sun filters through the classroom window as Miss Kayla hums a cheerful tune while greeting the toddlers.

“Good morning, friends!” she sings, tapping a small drum. *Boom, boom, boom!*

A few children eagerly pat their hands on their laps, mimicking the beat.

As the last child arrives, Miss Kayla strums her small ukulele and starts their morning song.

> “Hello, hello, it's time to start the day!
>
> Clap your hands and sing along,
>
> We'll learn and laugh and play!"
>
> **Some toddlers clap, others sway side to side, and a few simply watch with wide eyes, taking it all in.**
>
> ---
>
> Later, during transition time, Mr. Jordan plays a cleanup song on the classroom speaker.
>
> “Listen! The music says it’s time to clean up!” he announces, swaying to the rhythm as he picks up blocks.
>
> The toddlers giggle and begin placing toys in the bins, some humming along as they work.
>
> ---
>
> **At snack time, Miss Kayla leads a simple fingerplay:**
> "*Open, shut them, open, shut them,*
> *Give a little clap, clap, clap!*"
>
> Tiny hands mimic the motions, some more enthusiastically than others, but all engaged. As they settle at the table, she softly sings a familiar soft tune, creating a calm and cozy atmosphere.
>
> ---
>
> **Later in the day, the toddlers gather for music and movement. Mr. Jordan plays a lively animal song, and the children stomp like elephants, flap like birds, and wiggle like fish.**
>
> “Let’s jump like bunnies!” he calls, and soon the room is full of joyful bouncing.
>
> ---
>
> **As nap time approaches, Miss Kayla dims the lights and begins a soothing lullaby.**
>
> She gently pats the backs of the toddlers lying on their mats, her voice a soft hum against the quieting room. One by one, their eyelids grow heavy, drifting off to sleep to the rhythm of her song.

Below are several ideas for integrating music into a toddler’s day:

Singing Songs with Actions

Action Songs: Encourage toddlers to participate in songs with simple actions or gestures. For example, songs like "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" or "If You’re Happy and You Know It" allow toddlers to move their bodies and practice following instructions.

Personalized Songs: Sing songs that incorporate the child’s name to make them feel special, such as singing "This Is the Way We Say Hello" with each toddler’s name.



Figure 1.5.10: Head, shoulders, knees, and toes song.

Music During Transitions

Routine Songs: Use songs to signal transitions, such as clean-up songs or songs to help toddlers understand it's time to change activities (e.g., "Time to Tidy Up" or "It's Time for Circle Time").

Calming Music for Transition: Play soft or calming music when toddlers are transitioning from one activity to another, such as from playtime to snack time, to help soothe and prepare them.

Play Musical Instruments

Simple Instruments: Introduce toddler-friendly instruments like tambourines, maracas, small xylophones, or drums. Allow toddlers to explore these instruments by shaking, tapping, or banging them, which helps develop fine motor skills and an understanding of rhythm.

Instrument Exploration: Let toddlers experiment with different sounds, showing them how to create loud and soft sounds or high and low notes with various instruments.



Figure 1.5.11: Musical instrument play.

Rhythmic Movement and Dance

Dancing to the Beat: Encourage toddlers to dance, wiggle, or move their bodies to the rhythm of the music. Toddlers can clap, stomp, or sway in response to the music, which helps develop coordination and gross motor skills.

Movement Activities: Play songs that encourage specific movements like "Freeze Dance," where toddlers dance until the music stops and then freeze in place. This supports impulse control and coordination.

Music with Visual Elements

Music and Movement with Visuals: Use scarves, ribbons, or colorful streamers during music time to help toddlers engage in movement activities and explore textures while listening to different types of music.

Interactive Music Books: Play music and use interactive music books with buttons or features that allow toddlers to press and hear corresponding sounds, which can build cognitive and language skills.



Figure 1.5.12: Playing with scarves.

Sing Nursery Rhymes and Simple Melodies

Repetitive Rhymes: Sing familiar nursery rhymes such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or “The Wheels on the Bus.” These rhymes help toddlers learn about rhyming patterns, increase vocabulary, and engage them in rhythm. Visit The Imagination Tree Website to learn about a nursery rhyme basket.

Simple Melodies: Use simple and familiar melodies to help toddlers engage with music in a relaxed and enjoyable way, such as singing lullabies during quiet time or nap time.



Figure 1.5.13: Nursery rhyme singing basket.

Incorporate Music with Stories

Musical Storytelling: Integrate music into storytelling. For instance, you can sing parts of the story or add sound effects to bring the story to life. Toddlers can also participate by mimicking sounds and rhythms during the story.

Animal Sounds and Music: Use music to represent different animals or actions in stories, like the sound of a "roaring lion" or "flapping birds," encouraging toddlers to imitate these sounds with their own voices or instruments.

Use Music to Encourage Social Interaction

Group Singing Activities: Encourage toddlers to sing together, fostering social skills such as taking turns and sharing attention. Group activities like “Ring Around the Rosie” or “London Bridge” can help toddlers learn about cooperation.

Call-and-Response Songs: Engage toddlers in simple call-and-response songs where the teacher sings a line, and the toddlers repeat it. This promotes language development, memory, and attention.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Soothing Music for Calmness: Play gentle and calming music during quiet time or when toddlers need to wind down. This can help them regulate their emotions and settle down for naps or transitions.

Lively Music for Energizing: Use upbeat music to energize toddlers during active play times, such as dancing to lively songs or marching around the room.

Create Musical Rituals

Morning Welcome Songs: Greet toddlers with a welcoming song at the start of the day to create a positive and predictable routine. This can help toddlers feel more secure and excited about their day.

Goodbye Songs: Use a goodbye song at the end of the day, such as "Bye, Bye, Goodbye," to create closure and transition toddlers to their next activity or prepare them for pick-up.

By incorporating music into their daily routine, toddler teachers can support the development of motor skills, language, cognitive abilities, and social-emotional learning. Music creates an interactive and fun environment that encourages participation, boosts learning, and helps toddlers feel connected to the world around them.

Infants

Infant teachers can incorporate music into the daily routine in a variety of ways to support cognitive, emotional, and social development. Music is a powerful tool for infants, as it helps stimulate sensory processing, encourages language development, and fosters emotional connection. Here are some ways infant teachers can include music throughout the day:

Singing Simple Songs

Interactive Songs: Sing simple, repetitive songs that infants can respond to, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or "The Itsy Bitsy Spider." These songs can be accompanied by gestures or actions that help infants connect words with movements.

Personalized Songs: Sing songs that include the infant's name to build a sense of identity and help with language development.



Figure 1.5.14: Singing to an infant.

Infant Music Vignette

Infant teachers can easily integrate the signing of songs into their day. Read the vignette below to see how effortlessly it is done.

The soft hum of Miss Lily's voice fills the cozy infant room as she gently rocks in a chair, cradling baby Mateo in her arms. Around her, a few other babies sit on the plush rug, their wide eyes fixed on her face as she sings.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star..."

- Ava, lying on her tummy, kicks her legs and coos in response. Miss Lily smiles and leans toward her, exaggerating the motions of her fingers twinkling in the air.
- Carter, sitting nearby with a soft rattle in his hand, shakes it in rhythm to the song. “That’s right, Carter! You’re making music too!” Miss Lily encourages, her voice warm and inviting.

She transitions smoothly into *“The Wheels on the Bus,”* gently bouncing Mateo on her lap with each verse.

- As she sings about the wipers going *“swish, swish, swish,”* she softly moves Mia’s tiny hands back and forth, helping her engage with the rhythm.
- Mia giggles, her dark curls bouncing as she watches Miss Lily’s animated gestures.

Between songs, Miss Lily pauses to make eye contact with each child. “Who wants to hear the bumblebee song?” she asks with an excited whisper.

- A few of the infants babble in response, and she launches into *“I’m Bringing Home a Baby Bumblebee,”* lightly tapping their hands as if tiny bees were buzzing around.

As the music-filled morning continues, the room is filled with laughter, claps, and tiny voices experimenting with new sounds. Through song, Miss Lily isn’t just entertaining—she’s fostering connection, language, and joy, one little note at a time.

Play Music During Transitions

Soothing Music: Use soft, calming music during transitions, such as nap time or diaper changes, to help infants settle down and create a predictable routine.

Upbeat Music: Play lively music when transitioning to more active periods, like playtime or mealtime, to energize and engage the infants.

Musical Instruments

Exploration of Instruments: Provide simple musical instruments like tambourines, maracas, or small drums. Allow infants to explore sounds by shaking, banging, or tapping these instruments, which enhances fine motor skills and auditory development.

Group Music Making: Guide a group of infants in playing instruments together. Even if they are not coordinated, the experience of making sound together helps develop social skills and cooperation.



Figure 1.5.15: Simple musical instruments for exploration.

Rhythmic Movement and Dancing

Body Movement: Encourage infants to move their bodies to the beat of the music, even if it's just wiggling, clapping, or tapping their hands. This helps develop their gross motor skills and awareness of rhythm.

Parent-Infant Dance: During music time, encourage caregivers to gently sway or bounce with their infant to the music. This fosters bonding and provides a sensory-rich experience.

Nursery Rhymes and Vocal Play

Vocal Play: Engage infants in simple vocal play such as making animal sounds or singing with varying pitches and tones. This stimulates their auditory discrimination and speech development.

Nursery Rhymes: Recite and sing nursery rhymes that include rhyming patterns, repetitive phrases, and hand movements, which promote language development and memory.

Exposure to Different Types of Music

Variety of Genres: Play a range of musical genres such as classical, jazz, folk, and even different cultural music to expose infants to various sounds and rhythms. This can enhance sensory processing and introduce them to the diversity of music.

Live Music Experiences: If possible, provide live music experiences, such as a musician playing guitar or a parent or caregiver singing. This gives infants a direct connection to music-making and can engage them more deeply.

Music During Quiet Time or Naptime

Lullabies: Play soft lullabies during nap times to create a calm, soothing atmosphere. The repetitive, gentle melodies help signal to infants that it's time to rest.

Soft Ambient Music: Use background music with calming, slow tempos to create a peaceful environment for napping or quiet activities.

Incorporating Music with Stories

Musical Storytime: Combine reading with music by adding songs or musical sounds that go along with the story. This enhances the overall sensory experience and keeps the infants engaged.

Sound Effects: Use music or simple sound effects (e.g., bell sounds, drums) to complement storytelling and bring the story to life.

Voice and Tone Exploration

Singing with Different Emotions: Sing songs with varying tones, from happy and energetic to slow and soothing, helping infants understand the connection between vocal tones and emotions.

Exaggerated Vocalizations: Use exaggerated voices to capture infants' attention and help them explore the sounds of different pitches, speeds, and volumes.

Music and Social Interaction

Interactive Music Games: Involve babies in social activities like "peek-a-boo" or "pat-a-cake" to music. These activities promote social engagement, turn-taking, and communication.

Group Music Activities: Use group music time to promote interaction with caregivers and peers. Even simple interactions, like clapping hands together or playing instruments side-by-side, support social bonding.

Incorporating music into the day helps infants develop language skills, emotional regulation, and cognitive awareness of the world around them. By using music in a fun, interactive way, teachers can create an engaging and rich environment for infants to explore and learn.



Figure 1.5.16: Peek-a-boo play.

Conclusion

Incorporating music into daily routines for preschoolers, infants, and toddlers creates a vibrant and enriching learning environment that enhances their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Whether through singing simple songs, playing instruments, or engaging in movement-based activities, music provides a foundation for children to explore language, rhythm, and self-expression.

- For infants, the soft melodies and rhythmic sounds promote early communication and sensory exploration.
- Toddlers enjoy the dynamic interactions of musical play, which helps them develop motor skills and engage in creative expression.
- Preschoolers benefit from more complex songs that foster memory, attention, and social cooperation as they sing, dance, and follow along with structured musical activities.

Across all age groups, music becomes a powerful tool for building connections, supporting learning, and creating a joyful atmosphere where children can explore, grow, and thrive.

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This page is based on:

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1.6: Incorporating Movement into Daily Routines

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the various ways Movement Activities can be integrated into daily routines.

Introduction to Integrating Movement into Daily Routines

Movement is a fundamental aspect of human development, particularly during the early years of life. Integrating movement into daily routines for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants is crucial for fostering physical, cognitive, and social-emotional growth. This chapter delves into various strategies and activities that educators can employ to seamlessly incorporate movement into the daily lives of young children. By doing so, educators can support overall development and instill a lifelong appreciation for physical activity.

In this section, we will explore diverse methods for embedding movement activities into daily routines for different age groups. Movement is vital for the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of young children. The following strategies are tailored to preschoolers, toddlers, and infants:



Figure 1.6.1: Movement activity.



Figure 1.6.2: Many ways to move.

Preschoolers

Preschool teachers can incorporate movement activities into the daily routine to support physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development in young children. Here are several strategies to integrate movement throughout the day:

Morning Warm-Up Routines

Stretching and Simple Exercises: Start the day with simple stretches and exercises to help children wake up their muscles and get their energy flowing. For example, movements like reaching for the sky, bending down to touch toes, or stretching like a cat and dog can be fun and engaging.

Dance and Music

Dance Parties: Play music and encourage children to move their bodies in different ways—slow, fast, big, or small. Dancing to rhythm helps with coordination, balance, and listening skills.

Follow the Leader: Play music and let the children move around while imitating the teacher's movements or actions. For instance, they could hop like a bunny, slither like a snake, or spin like a top.

Obstacle Courses

Indoor or Outdoor Obstacle Courses: Set up a safe obstacle course that involves crawling, jumping, climbing, and balancing. This promotes gross motor skills, coordination, and spatial awareness.

Balance Beams and Hurdles: Use simple equipment like foam blocks or balance beams for toddlers to practice balancing and climbing.



Figure 1.6.3: Obstacle activity.

Circle Time Movement

Active Storytelling: During circle time, incorporate movement into storytelling. For example, children can act out parts of a story by moving their bodies, like "flying like a bird" or "marching like soldiers."

Songs with Actions: Use songs that include movements, such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" or "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," which encourage children to follow along with different actions.

Playful Physical Games

Simon Says: A classic game where the teacher gives commands that children must follow (e.g., "Simon says hop on one foot"). It encourages listening skills and physical movement.

Freeze Dance: Play music and have the children dance until the music stops. When it stops, they must freeze in place. This helps with impulse control and coordination.

Outdoor Play

Free Play: Encourage outdoor activities such as running, climbing, jumping, and playing ball games. These activities promote physical health, coordination, and social interaction.

Nature Walks: Take the children on nature walks where they can observe the environment and engage in activities like jumping over puddles or walking along a line.

Yoga and Mindfulness

Simple Yoga Poses: Introduce basic yoga poses like the tree pose, the butterfly pose, or the downward dog. Yoga helps with balance, flexibility, and mindfulness.

Breathing Exercises: Teach children simple breathing techniques, such as blowing out birthday candles or "smelling the flowers," to promote relaxation and awareness of their bodies.

Interactive Games

Animal Movements: Have children move like different animals. For example, they could "hop like a frog," "waddle like a penguin,"

or "slither like a snake." This helps with creativity and coordination.

Ball Skills: Roll, toss, or kick soft balls to help children develop hand-eye coordination and motor skills.

Transition Activities

Movement During Transitions: Incorporate simple movement tasks during transitions. For example, children can jump like frogs to the next activity area or march like soldiers to wash their hands.

Preschool Movement Vignette

The vignette below shows what integrating movement activities throughout the day might look like in a preschool classroom.

A Day in Motion: Integrating Movement into a Preschool Routine

It's a crisp morning at Bright Beginnings Preschool, and Ms. Laura and Mr. James welcome their group of energetic four-year-olds into the classroom. Right away, they integrate movement into the routine.

Morning Arrival & Sign-In:
Instead of a traditional sign-in sheet, Ms. Laura sets up a "Jump and Sign" station. Each child hops in place three times before choosing their name card and sticking it on the attendance board. "Let's wake up our brains and bodies!" she cheers.

Circle Time Wiggles:
As the class gathers on the rug, Mr. James notices some fidgeting. He leads a quick "Shake It Out" routine—wiggling fingers, shaking arms, and stretching up high before settling into their morning songs.

Transitioning with Movement:
Before heading to learning centers, the teachers turn the transition into a movement game. "If you're going to the art table, tiptoe like a sneaky mouse! If you're going to the block center, stomp like a dinosaur!" Giggles fill the room as the children move with excitement.

Outdoor Gross Motor Play:
At the playground, Ms. Laura incorporates purposeful movement by setting up an obstacle course with cones to zigzag through, a low balance beam, and a jumping challenge. "Who can hop like a frog to the fence and back?" she asks, encouraging both fun and coordination skills.

Math Through Movement:
During small group time, Mr. James integrates movement into math. The children count aloud as they do jumping jacks, hop on one foot to practice one-to-one correspondence, and clap out patterns—"clap, clap, stomp, clap, clap, stomp!"

Snack Time Action:
Before sitting down for snacks, the teachers guide the children in a "pretend-to-pick-fruit" stretch, reaching high for apples and bending low for strawberries. "Now that we've gathered our snacks, let's eat them!"

Goodbye with a Groove:
As the day winds down, the children gather for their goodbye song, but instead of sitting, they move. "Let's wave our arms, stomp our feet, and spin in a circle as we sing our goodbye song!"

With movement woven into every part of the day, the preschoolers stay engaged, focused, and happy.

Toddlers

Toddler teachers incorporate movement activities into the day to promote physical development, coordination, and cognitive skills while engaging children in fun and active learning. Here are several ways toddler teachers integrate movement into daily routines:

Movement Songs and Rhymes

Songs with Actions: Toddlers enjoy songs that involve actions, such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," "If You're Happy and You Know It," or "The Wheels on the Bus." These songs encourage physical movement and help toddlers learn body awareness and coordination.

Animal Movements: Singing songs or playing games where toddlers mimic animal movements, such as hopping like a frog, slithering like a snake, or waddling like a penguin, supports gross motor development.

Free Play and Exploration

Climbing and Crawling: Set up safe spaces for climbing, crawling, and rolling. These activities build strength, balance, and spatial awareness. Simple items like soft mats or play tunnels can be used to promote exploration and movement.

Walking and Strolling: Toddlers can walk or run around designated safe areas, helping to develop gross motor skills and coordination. Teachers can also take the children on outdoor walks to explore their environment.

Marching: Toddlers enjoy marching to songs like "We Are the Dinosaurs" by the Laurie Berkner Band.

Interactive Movement Games

Simon Says: A classic game where toddlers are asked to perform actions, such as jumping, spinning, or stomping. This helps with listening skills and following directions while staying active.

Freeze Dance: Play music and let toddlers dance freely. When the music stops, they must freeze in place. This game helps develop self-regulation and coordination.

Fine and Gross Motor Activities

Stacking and Building: Encourage toddlers to stack blocks or build with large-sized LEGO bricks, which require them to use hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. Incorporating movement into these activities, such as reaching or squatting to pick up blocks, adds a physical element.

Ball Skills: Play with soft balls, encouraging toddlers to kick, throw, or roll them. This supports their coordination, balance, and hand-eye coordination.

Stretching and Yoga

Simple Yoga Poses: Introduce basic, toddler-friendly yoga poses, such as "downward dog" or "cat-cow." These poses help toddlers improve flexibility, balance, and body awareness.

Stretching: Stretching activities, such as reaching up to the sky or touching their toes, help with flexibility and muscle tone.

Dance and Movement Exploration

Free Dance Time: Provide opportunities for toddlers to explore dance movements. This could include hopping, twirling, or swaying to music. Dance helps develop rhythm, coordination, and physical expression.

Dance Props: Use props like scarves, ribbons, or musical instruments (e.g., tambourines) that toddlers can move with while they dance, encouraging creative movement and sensory development.

Outdoor Play and Exploration

Nature Walks and Play: Taking toddlers outdoors allows them to explore their environment. Activities like running, jumping, and playing on age-appropriate playground equipment help develop motor skills and social interactions.

Push and Pull Toys: Use toys like small wagons, carts, or ride-on vehicles that toddlers can push or pull. These activities build strength and coordination.

Movement During Transitions

Movement-Based Transitions: Incorporate simple movements during transition times, such as hopping to the next area, marching to wash hands, or twirling while waiting for the next activity.

Toddler Movement Vignette

This vignette captures how toddler teachers can seamlessly integrate movement into daily routines:

Little Movers: A Day of Movement in the Toddler Classroom

The sun peeks through the windows as the toddlers at Happy Sprouts Childcare toddle into the room, greeted by Ms. Rosa and Mr. Kai. With wobbly legs and boundless energy, the little ones are ready for a day filled with movement woven into their routine.

Morning Arrival & Welcome Wiggles:
As toddlers transition into the classroom, Ms. Rosa greets each child with a playful movement. “Can you give me a big bear hug? Now let’s wiggle our fingers up high! Great job, now let’s put our coats away!” This gentle movement helps ease the transition from home to school.

Circle Time Stretches:
Before starting their morning songs, Mr. Kai leads a stretch-and-wiggle warm-up. “Can you stretch like a tall tree? Now sway in the wind! Oh no, a squirrel is running up your trunk—wiggle, wiggle!” The toddlers giggle as they move their bodies before sitting for a short story.

Diapering & Handwashing Groove:
When it’s time for diaper changes and handwashing, the teachers use movement to keep toddlers engaged. “Let’s march to the sink! Stomp, stomp, stomp!” Ms. Rosa sings a silly washing song as the toddlers scrub their hands, dancing along as they dry them with paper towels.

Music & Movement:
A toddler taps on the classroom drum, signaling music time! Mr. Kai puts on a familiar song, and the room turns into a mini dance party. Toddlers twirl, jump, and shake scarves to the beat. One little boy spins until he plops onto the floor in a fit of giggles.

Outdoor Exploration:
Outside, the teachers turn their nature walk into an active adventure. “Let’s stomp like elephants! Now tiptoe like sneaky cats!” The toddlers delight in mimicking the movements, making their walk full of laughter and energy.

Transitioning with Actions:
Instead of calling toddlers to the lunch table one by one, Ms. Rosa turns it into a movement game. “If you’re wearing something red, hop to the table! If you have curly hair, wiggle like a fish on your way over!” The toddlers eagerly participate, moving with purpose.

Nap Time Wind-Down:
To prepare for rest time, Mr. Kai guides the toddlers through gentle movements. “Let’s sway like the leaves, then curl up like tiny mice.” The slow, calming motions help them settle onto their cots, breathing deeply as lullabies play softly.

Goodbye with Hugs & High-Fives:
As families arrive for pickup, the toddlers get to choose their goodbye movement. “Do you want a big bear hug, a high-five, or a twirly spin?” Some reach out for hugs, while others giggle as they twirl one last time before heading home.

From morning to evening, movement is a natural and joyful part of the toddlers’ day, keeping their bodies and minds engaged while supporting their development.

Infants

Infant teachers incorporate movement activities throughout the day to support the physical, cognitive, and sensory development of infants. These activities help strengthen muscles, improve coordination, and foster early motor skills. Here are some ways infant teachers can integrate movement activities:

Tummy Time

Tummy Time: Infants benefit greatly from tummy time, which encourages neck and upper body strength. It helps infants develop the muscles needed for rolling over, crawling, and eventually sitting up. Teachers can place infants on their stomachs for brief periods several times a day, using toys or mirrors to encourage reaching and head-lifting.



Figure 1.6.4: Tummy time.

Assisted Sitting and Reaching

Sitting with Support: As infants grow, teachers can assist them in sitting up by providing support behind their backs. Encouraging them to reach for toys while sitting helps with balance, coordination, and strengthening core muscles.

Reaching Activities: Teachers can place brightly colored toys just out of an infant's reach to encourage them to stretch and move toward the toy. This promotes flexibility and muscle development.

Crawling and Rolling

Crawling and Rolling Activities: For infants who are starting to crawl, teachers can create safe spaces where they can explore. Encouraging rolling (from tummy to back and vice versa) helps with coordination and spatial awareness.

Soft Obstacles: Providing a safe, soft environment where infants can crawl over cushions or low obstacles helps improve their crawling skills and muscle development.

Gentle Movement and Rocking

Rocking: Infants often enjoy gentle rocking movements, which can calm them and promote relaxation. Teachers can rock infants in their arms or in a cradle to support their sense of security and rhythm.

Movement in the Carrier: For younger infants, being gently rocked or moved in a baby carrier or sling allows them to experience movement while staying close to a caregiver.

Dance and Rhythm

Gentle Dancing: While holding infants, teachers can dance to music or move rhythmically. The motion of dancing stimulates infants' sense of rhythm, coordination, and balance. It also provides sensory stimulation, which can be soothing and engaging.

Bouncing Rhythms: Teachers can gently bounce infants on their laps to the beat of music, helping them experience rhythm and movement while developing early motor skills.

Stretching and Flexing

Gentle Stretching: Infant teachers can guide babies through gentle stretches, such as raising their arms over their head or flexing their legs. This helps with flexibility and muscle development.

Bicycle Legs: For infants who are lying on their backs, teachers can gently move their legs in a bicycle motion. This helps to promote leg strength and mobility.

Interactive Movement

Baby Yoga: Simple movements like "baby yoga" can be introduced, where infants are gently guided through stretches or movements that mimic poses (such as bringing their legs to their chest or reaching for their feet).

Sensory Play with Movement: Incorporating movement into sensory play, such as rolling or gently rocking a ball, encourages infants to interact with the environment and enhances body awareness.

Outdoor Movement

Outdoor Exploration: If appropriate, teachers can take infants outside for fresh air and sensory exploration. Even if they are not yet walking, the motion of being carried or moved in a stroller provides new sensory experiences and exposure to different environments.

Infant Movement Vignette

This vignette explores how infant teachers integrate movement into daily routines:

Gentle Rhythms: A Day of Movement in the Infant Room

The soft hum of lullabies plays as Ms. Anna and Mr. Jordan welcome the infants into the Cozy Nest Infant Room. Some babies arrive in their caregivers' arms, while others wiggle excitedly in their strollers. Right from the start, movement is woven into the day's rhythm.

Morning Warm-Up & Tummy Time Play:
As Ms. Anna gently lifts a sleepy baby from their car seat, she stretches their little arms and legs while cooing, "Good morning, sweet one! Let's wake up those toes!" On the soft rug, a few infants enjoy tummy time, reaching for colorful fabric scarves as Mr. Jordan encourages them. "Can you push up like a big, strong puppy?" he asks, as a little one kicks their legs in excitement.

Diapering & Gentle Stretches:
During diaper changes, Ms. Anna takes a moment to engage each baby in movement. "Let's bicycle your legs—zoom, zoom! Now let's touch those tiny toes to your nose!" The infants giggle and coo, enjoying the warm, interactive care.

Rocking & Rhyming Transitions:
Before bottle time, Mr. Jordan cradles a baby in his arms, swaying gently to the rhythm of a nursery rhyme. "Row, row, row your boat..." he sings softly, rocking side to side. Another infant watches, kicking their legs in delight, so he playfully bounces them on his knee to the beat.

Exploring Movement on the Floor:
On the soft play mat, Ms. Anna places a rattle just out of reach of a curious baby, encouraging them to roll toward it. “You’re almost there!” she cheers. Nearby, a nine-month-old pulls up to a standing position using a low, cushioned bench. Mr. Jordan claps, celebrating their effort. “Look at you go, big kid!”

Outdoor Wiggles & Nature Walk:
When the weather allows, the teachers take the babies for a stroller ride outside. The gentle motion soothes them, and they watch the trees sway. Those who are more mobile have a chance to feel the grass under their fingers, practice sitting, or reach for bubbles floating in the breeze.

Lap Bounces & Interactive Songs:
Back inside, it’s time for a movement-filled sing-along. Ms. Anna sits with a baby on her lap, bouncing them gently as she sings, “The grand old Duke of York, he marched them up the hill and down again!” The babies giggle as they experience the rise and fall of movement in the teachers’ arms.

Wind-Down & Cuddles:
As nap time approaches, Mr. Jordan dims the lights and sways with a sleepy infant, rubbing their back in slow, rhythmic circles. Some babies settle into cribs, while others snuggle against their teachers’ chests, gently rocked into slumber.

From the tiniest wiggles to the biggest stretches, movement is a natural part of the infants’ day, supporting their development, strengthening connections, and filling the room with warmth and joy.

Conclusion

Incorporating movement into daily routines—whether for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers—supports key areas of development, including motor skills, coordination, and even cognitive growth. By weaving simple, age-appropriate activities, such as:

- tummy time for infants
- freeze-dance for toddlers
- and obstacle courses for preschoolers

Teachers can keep children active, engaged, and learning. Everyday moments, like transitions or mealtimes, become natural opportunities to build strength, confidence, and joyful exploration through movement.

References

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1.7: Incorporating SSAMM into Everyday Interactions

Introduction

The previous sections in the text introduced ways SSAMM can be integrated into the daily schedule through classroom routines; however, in early childhood classrooms, learning happens not just during structured activities but throughout the entire day, during greetings, play, routines, and transitions. These everyday moments offer rich opportunities to engage children in SSAMM learning through verbal and nonverbal interactions while supporting their development across multiple domains and content areas.



Figure 1.7.1: High five with a child.

Integration of SSAMM in Daily Experiences

This section of the chapter explores how Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement can be meaningfully integrated into daily verbal and non-verbal experiences with young children. These interactions are not isolated experiences, they are powerful tools for helping children express themselves, connect with others, and make sense of their world.

- **Social Studies** builds identity and a sense of community through conversations about family, roles, and relationships, supported by gestures, modeling, and shared routines.
- **Art** fosters creativity and emotional expression, with teachers using descriptive language, visual cues, and encouragement to support exploration.
- **Music** enhances memory, language, and emotional regulation. Songs, rhythms, and voice inflection turn transitions into learning opportunities.
- **Movement** supports physical growth, self-regulation, and confidence, and is often a child's first language for expressing ideas and emotions.

Throughout this section, you will discover how to intentionally integrate Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement into the everyday life of the classroom. From arrivals to departures, diapering to dramatic play, you'll explore ways to engage children that are holistic, inclusive, and grounded in developmentally appropriate practice. **Verbal and nonverbal strategies**—such as language, tone, gestures, and movement—will be highlighted as powerful tools for connection, communication, and creativity. These approaches support all learners, including those who are preverbal, dual language learners, or those who benefit from alternative forms of expression, turning everyday moments into meaningful learning experiences.

Practical Strategies for Integration

The following sections will provide practical strategies for integrating **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into both **verbal and nonverbal interactions** across the early childhood years. You'll explore age-appropriate approaches for **infants, toddlers, and preschoolers**, with examples that highlight how these domains can be meaningfully woven into daily routines, transitions, and play-based experiences.

Incorporating SSAMM with Infants

Incorporating **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into verbal and nonverbal interactions with **infants** is all about using **responsive, sensory-rich, and developmentally appropriate experiences**. Since infants rely heavily on **nonverbal communication**, much of the learning happens through **gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, modeling, and sensory play.** The chart below shows ways to incorporate each SSAMM content area into verbal and non-verbal interactions with infants.

Non-Verbal Interactions with Infants

👶 SOCIAL STUDIES (Identity, Family, Relationships)	🎨 ART (Sensory Exploration)	🎶 MUSIC (Listening, Sound Awareness, Rhythm)	🕺 MOVEMENT (Gross Motor Development, Body Awareness)
Verbal Interactions			
• **Use infants' names often:** "Hi, Maria! You're waving to me!" • **Talk about family members:** "Daddy is coming back after lunch." • **Narrate routines to build trust and predictability:** "I'm picking you up now."	• **Describe textures:** "This paint feels squishy!" • **Label colors as they explore:** "You picked the red crayon!"	• **Sing lullabies, rhymes, and songs often.** • **Use repetition and emphasize emotion in your voice:** "Twinkle, twinkle, little star..." with exaggerated tone and pauses. • **Make playful vocal sounds and mimic the infant's coos.**	• **Name body parts during diaper changes or movement play:** "Let's stretch your arms up high!" • **Narrate action:** "You're rolling over! You did it!"

👶 SOCIAL STUDIES (Identity, Family, Relationships)	🎨 ART (Sensory Exploration)	🎶 MUSIC (Listening, Sound Awareness, Rhythm)	🕺 MOVEMENT (Gross Motor Development, Body Awareness)
Nonverbal Interactions			
• **Smiling, cuddling, and eye contact** show warmth and build secure attachments. • Use **family photos** during routines—point, name, and smile while showing them. • Model **gentle touch** and **turn-taking in simple interactions** (like passing a toy back and forth).	• Offer **safe, edible, or washable materials** like yogurt painting or finger painting with supervision. • **Gently guide their hands to touch different textures:** soft fabric, bumpy cardboard, cool paint. • Respond with **expressive gestures** when they engage—clap, nod, smile.	• **Bounce, sway, and rock babies to music.** • **Offer simple instruments** like rattles, shakers, or drums that they can safely hit or shake. • **Clap along with the music and encourage mimicry.**	• Encourage movement with **tummy time toys**, safe spaces for crawling, or simple obstacle courses. • Use **gesture games** like pat-a-cake or "So Big!" with hand motions. • **Mirror the baby's movements and facial expressions.**

Bringing It All Together: Sample Experience

The example below shares what it might look like in an infant classroom when integrating all of the content areas of SSAMM, including verbal and non-verbal interactions, into one activity.

Activity: *Family Song & Movement Circle*

- Play soft music while showing family photo cards.
- Gently bounce or sway with infants in your arms while singing a family-themed song ("Who Loves Baby?").
- Pause to make eye contact, name family members, and smile.
- Provide soft-textured scarves for babies to touch or wave.

Weekly Integration of SSAMM (Monday–Friday)

What might a **week's worth of infant activities** (Monday–Friday) that thoughtfully integrate **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into **verbal and nonverbal interactions look like?** The weekly chart below includes simple materials, sensory experiences, and relationship-building opportunities appropriate for infants (0–18 months), with modifications noted when helpful.

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Monday All About Me	**Social Studies:** self-awareness **Music** **Movement**	• Baby-safe mirror • soft floor mat • gentle music	• "Who do you see in the mirror? That's YOU!" • **Sing baby's name in a simple song:** "Emma is here today!"	• Gently guide the baby's hand to touch their reflection. • Rock or bounce baby gently to the rhythm.	• For younger infants, hold them in front of the mirror. • For older infants, allow crawling/ walking to mirror.
Tuesday Texture Art Time	**Art** sensory exploration **Movement**	• Ziplock bag with paint or colored yogurt • fabric swatches	• "You're squishing the blue paint—squish, squish!" • "That fabric feels so soft, like a blanket."	• Guide baby's hand to explore materials. • Show joyful facial expressions when they touch or explore.	Use edible materials (e.g., yogurt and food coloring) for younger infants still mouthing.
Wednesday Family & Friends Circle	**Social Studies** family community **Music**	• Photos of family members • Stuffed animals or dolls • soft music	• "That's your grandma! Can you wave to her?" • Sing: "Where is [Mommy]?" to Frère Jacques	• Point to and name people in photos. • Encourage waving, clapping, or reaching.	Use black-and-white images for very young infants.
Thursday Let's Move to the Music	**Music** **Movement**	**Soft Instruments** • Shakers • rattles **Rhythmic Songs** **Scarves**	• "Shake, shake, shake your rattle!" • "You're moving your body with the music—yay!"	• Gently assist the baby in shaking or waving a scarf. • Clap and bounce baby to the rhythm.	Infants not yet sitting can be rocked or held; crawlers can explore instruments on the floor.

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Friday Colors of Me	**Art** **Social Studies** identity **Movement**	• Colorful baby-safe scarves • soft crayons (for older infants) • songs	• "You're holding the red scarf—red like an apple!" • Sing: "Red, yellow, green and blue..."	• Use scarves for peek-a-boo and movement play • Model reaching, waving, or grasping.	Older infants can make marks on paper with jumbo crayons.

Tips for All Activities With Infants

- **Keep routines predictable** and be responsive to infant cues.
- **Always narrate** what you and the baby are doing—this builds language and trust.
- **Maintain eye contact,** use expressive faces, and offer gentle touch to reinforce connection.
- **Follow the baby's lead**—pause or adapt if overstimulation occurs.

Toddlers

Incorporating **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into **verbal and nonverbal interactions with toddlers** (ages 1–3) is all about engaging their growing independence, curiosity, and love for repetition and routines. Toddlers learn best through **hands-on experiences** and **responsive interactions**—both verbal (words, songs, questions) and nonverbal (gestures, modeling, tone, facial expressions). Explore the chart below to discover ways to incorporate each SSAMM content area into verbal and non-verbal interactions with toddlers.

👶 SOCIAL STUDIES (Identity, Family, Community, Routines)	🎨 ART (Exploration, Expression, Creativity)	🎶 MUSIC (Rhythm, Listening, Expression)	🕺 MOVEMENT (Gross Motor Skills, Coordination, Expression)
Verbal Interactions			
• **Use children's names and describe their actions:** "Look at Ava helping her friend. You're being kind!" • **Talk about families and routines:** "You eat rice at home too? That's your favorite!"	• **Describe what toddlers are doing:** "You're using green and yellow paint together." • **Encourage expressive language:** "Tell me about your picture!" (Even if it's scribbles!)	• **Sing familiar songs and invite toddlers to join in:** "Old MacDonald had a...?" (Let them fill in!) • **Use songs with directions:** "Clap your hands, stomp your feet!"	• **Narrate actions:** "You're jumping so high! Now you're crawling like a kitty." • **Use action songs:** "If You're Happy and You Know It"
Nonverbal Interactions			
• **Use visual cues for routines** (e.g., pictures of handwashing steps). • **Provide real-life props for dramatic play** (e.g., phones, pots, dress-up clothes). • **Smile, point, and use gentle gestures to guide turn-taking and cooperation**.	• **Demonstrate how to use materials:** squish playdough, dip brush, or tear paper. • **Use facial expressions and gestures to show excitement** about their art. • **Offer choices** by pointing or holding up two materials.	• **Use hand motions and facial expressions during songs** (e.g., "The Wheels on the Bus"). • **Provide instruments** (shakers, drums) and demonstrate how to use them. • **Use movement props** like scarves to encourage dancing.	• **Model movements:** hopping, balancing, reaching. • **Use body language and pointing to guide activities**. • **Play movement games** like "Follow the Leader" with exaggerated gestures.
Activity Idea			
Family Photo Board Children point to family photos, and you name each person and say something like, "That's your grandma. She loves you!"	***Color Collage*** Offer tissue paper in various colors and let toddlers glue pieces onto paper while you describe the textures and colors.	***Morning Song*** Circle Sing "Hello" songs, use name recognition, and include movement like waving or clapping for each child.	***Animal Movement Parade*** Ask, "Can you stomp like an elephant?" and model the movement. Let toddlers take turns choosing animals to act out.

Quick Tips for Toddler Engagement

- **Repeat words and actions** often to build understanding.
- **Use gestures, pictures, and tone** to support language comprehension.
- **Follow their lead** and expand on what they're interested in.
- **Celebrate attempts at communication,** verbal or not!

Below is a **weekly lesson plan for toddlers** (Monday–Friday) that integrates **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into developmentally appropriate **verbal and nonverbal interactions**. Each day includes a theme, activity ideas, and tips for how to engage toddlers through both language and gestures.

Toddler Weekly Integrated Learning Plan Theme: *"All About Me and My World"* (Focus on identity, family, community, and feelings)

Toddler Weekly Integrated Learning Plan

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Monday My Family and Me	**Social Studies** **Music**	• Family song photos • name cards	• "Who is in your family?" • "Let's sing your name!"	• Model waving • use name cards or photos • gentle clapping	Offer visual supports and repetitive songs for consistency
Tuesday Colorful Feelings	**Art** **Social Studies** • emotions	• Tissue paper • glue sticks • colored paper	• "Red is for excited! • "How do you feel?"	• Point to feeling cards • mirror facial expressions	• Use basic feeling visuals; • allow free exploration
Wednesday Move Like Me	**Movement** **Music**	• Animal pictures • open space	• "Can you stomp like an elephant?"	• Model movements • Model facial expressions	Use real animal sounds or props for engagement
Thursday Painting Our Neighborhood	**Art** **Social Studies** • community	• Paint brushes • large paper • toy vehicles	• "What color is your house?" • "Who lives there?"	• Model brushing • pointing to community symbols	Allow group painting or individual space based on comfort

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Friday Sing and Celebrate	**Music** **Movement** **Social Studies:** • belonging	• Scarves • rhythm instruments • name song	• "Let's dance with your name!" • "What is your favorite move?"	• Encourage free • movement clapping • group dances	Modify tempo or volume for sensory-sensitive children

Preschoolers

Incorporating **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** into **verbal and nonverbal interactions with preschoolers** (ages 3–5) helps support development in communication, self-regulation, creativity, motor skills, and cultural awareness. Preschoolers are becoming more verbal, imaginative, and social, so this is a prime age for **intentional, play-based, and integrated learning**.

Embedding SSAMM Content Areas

Here's how to embed these content areas meaningfully through both **verbal** and **nonverbal** interactions.

🌍 SOCIAL STUDIES (Identity, community, culture, relationships)	🎨 ART (Creativity, self-expression, fine motor skills)	🎶 MUSIC (Listening, rhythm, self-regulation, emotional expression)	🕺 MOVEMENT (Gross motor development, coordination, body awareness)
Verbal Interactions			
• **Engage in conversations** about themselves and others: • "Who lives in your house?" or "What do you like to eat with your family?" • **Use storytelling and books** to discuss community helpers, diversity, and roles: • "This character is a nurse. What do nurses do to help us?"	• **Comment on the process**, not the product: • "You're using lots of lines here. What do they remind you of?" • **Ask open-ended questions:** • "Can you tell me about what you're making?"	• **Lead songs with call-and-response or movement cues**: • "Everybody say 'la-la-la!'" or "Clap your hands with me!" • **Introduce vocabulary related to music** (beat, fast, slow, loud, soft)	• **Give clear, descriptive instructions:** • "Let's stretch up like the sky, now curl into a tiny seed!" • **Use movement stories or games:** • "Pretend you're walking through a jungle—what do you see?"
Nonverbal Interactions			
• Use **visuals and props** (maps, family photos, community helper costumes) • Model **respectful body language** like nodding, eye contact, and waiting for turns • Use **role play** and **dramatic play** to explore family and cultural roles	• **Demonstrate techniques** like stamping, brushing, or rolling • **Use facial expressions** to show excitement and encouragement • **Offer choices visually** ("Do you want red or blue?" while holding up both)	• **Use body movements** to match musical cues: fast stomping, slow swaying • **Show rhythm** with clapping, tapping, and shaking • **Use facial expressions** to reflect the mood of a song	• **Demonstrate movements** for imitation (hopping, balancing, skipping) • **Use gesture-based games** like "Simon Says" or "Follow the Leader." • Offer movement cards **or picture prompts as nonverbal cues**

🌍 SOCIAL STUDIES (Identity, community, culture, relationships)	🎨 ART (Creativity, self-expression, fine motor skills)	🎶 MUSIC (Listening, rhythm, self-regulation, emotional expression)	🕺 MOVEMENT (Gross motor development, coordination, body awareness)
Activity Idea			
Dramatic Play Create a pretend bakery in dramatic play. Children role-play jobs and use menus with pictures—teachers support using hand gestures, expressions, and naming actions.	***Painting*** During painting, a teacher nods and smiles while saying, "Wow, I see spirals!" and gestures a spiral in the air.	***Singing*** While singing "If You're Happy and You Know It," the teacher claps along, exaggerating her smile and pointing to her face during "then your face will surely show it."	***Modeling Behavior Expectations*** During transitions, the teacher models tiptoeing to the line while softly humming a tune to guide movement.

Quick Integration Tips

- **Blend content areas:** a music and movement game can reinforce community roles or feelings.
- **Support language development** through verbal naming and **emotional understanding** through nonverbal mirroring.
- **Observe and respond to children's cue**s—sometimes a nonverbal signal like a nod or a pause is more powerful than words.

Below is a **weekly preschool lesson plan** (Monday–Friday) with integrated opportunities for **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement**, all supported through **verbal and nonverbal interactions**. It's developmentally appropriate for preschoolers (ages 3–5) and easily adaptable for different classroom needs.

Preschool Weekly Integrated Learning Plan Theme: *"Me, My Family, and My Community"*

Preschool Weekly Integrated Learning Plan

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Monday All About Me	**Social Studies** **Art**	• Mirrors • crayons • paper	• "What color are your eyes?" • "Tell me about your picture."	• Model looking in the mirror, drawing features	• Support tracing or scribbling for varying skill levels

Day of the Week	Focus	Materials	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions	Modifications
Tuesday Family Fun Day	**Social Studies** **Music**	• Family drawings • soft music storybooks	• "Who do you live with?" • "What song does your family sing?"	• Use gestures to show family size or home actions	• Provide picture prompts for storytelling
Wednesday Helping Hands	**Social Studies** **Movement**	• Dress-up props • Helper cards	• "What does a firefighter do?"	• Act out roles with exaggerated movements	• Pair verbal prompts with picture clues
Thursday Colors of Our World	**Art** **Music**	• Paint • Music player smocks	• "What does this music feel like?"	• Demonstrate painting with tempo changes	• Offer both fast/slow music for choice
Friday Friendship Celebration	**Social Studies** **Music** **Movement**	• Instruments • Paper hearts • Music	• "What makes a good friend?"	• Use partner dancing or mirroring actions	• Offer quiet participation options if needed

Optional Preschool Learning Centers (All Week)

Optional Preschool Learning Centers

Center	Activity	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions
Art	Family collages with magazine cutouts	"Who's this in your picture?"	Show how to glue, hold up photos
Dramatic Play	Doctor's office, kitchen, and postal worker	"What are you cooking today?"	Model actions (bandaging, stirring)

Center	Activity	Verbal Interactions	Nonverbal Interactions
Music	Rhythm instruments, headphones with songs	“Shake it slow… now fast!”	Demonstrate beat with tapping
Movement	**Obstacle course, yoga poses**	“Can you crawl under like a tunnel?”	Show how to jump, stretch

Conclusion

The many examples in this textbook reading show exactly how teachers can blend verbal and nonverbal interactions into Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement in easy, practical ways. When teachers include these content areas in everyday classroom activities, children learn in natural and fun settings. It’s surprisingly simple to combine spoken words with physical cues—like gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice—to prompt discussions, describe artwork, add hand motions to songs, or encourage dance and movement. By using both verbal and nonverbal communication, educators create a safe space where children feel understood and supported, allowing them to explore, express themselves, and build important skills for the future.

Reference

ChatGPT. (2025). *Integrated early childhood activities: Social studies, art, music, and movement in daily interactions*. OpenAI.

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1.8: Incorporating SSAMM into Transition Activities

Introduction

In early childhood education, the integration of SSAMM (Social Studies, Art, Music and Movement) into daily routines is crucial for holistic development. While structured activities play a significant role, the true essence of learning in these formative years extends beyond the confines of planned lessons. It encompasses the myriad of interactions and experiences that occur throughout the day.



Figure 1.8.1: Transition to lining up.

The Importance of Transitions in the Early Childhood Classroom

Transitions—those moments when **children move from one activity or routine to another**—are powerful opportunities for fostering smooth classroom management, social-emotional growth, and ongoing learning. In infant, toddler, and preschool settings, these short "in-between" times can often be overlooked or treated as simple breaks. **However, when carefully planned, transitions play a vital role in supporting young children's development, ensuring the daily routine runs smoothly, and reinforcing curriculum goals in engaging ways.**

Ensuring a Smooth Daily Routine

Predictability and Security: Young children, especially infants and toddlers, thrive when their day follows a predictable pattern. Transition cues—like a short song or a visual signal—help them feel secure because they can anticipate what's coming next.

Reduced Stress and Challenging Behaviors: Abrupt changes often lead to frustration or behavioral issues. Well-planned transition activities create a gentle bridge between one part of the day and the next, minimizing confusion and chaos.

Maximizing Instructional Time: By intentionally planning transitions, teachers spend less time on managing behaviors or waiting for children to settle, and more time on rich, meaningful learning experiences.

Importance of Planning for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

Social and Emotional Development: Transition activities often involve group participation, like clean-up songs or fingerplays.

These shared rituals foster cooperation, turn-taking, and a sense of belonging.

Building Independence and Self-Help Skills: For toddlers and preschoolers, transitions can serve as practice for age-appropriate tasks (e.g., washing hands, putting away toys). Structured routines help children gain confidence in their abilities.

Opportunities for Learning in "In-Between" Moments: Even short transitions can incorporate language building, counting, or basic science concepts. This makes every moment an opportunity for skill reinforcement rather than lost time.

Linking Transitions to the Curriculum

Reinforcing Key Concepts: When transition activities tie to your current theme or lesson (such as singing number songs during math units), they become natural extensions of learning rather than unrelated "fillers."

Continuous and Connected Learning: Relating transitions to what children are learning elsewhere in the day shows them that learning isn't confined to a single block of time. This consistency deepens understanding and builds stronger connections.

Sustaining Engagement: Curriculum-aligned transitions—like acting out animal movements during a unit on wildlife—keep children's enthusiasm high. It reminds them of the thematic focus and makes learning feel seamless and fun.

Holistic Development: Linking transitions to curriculum goals allows teachers to address multiple developmental domains—cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills—all within brief, playful routines.

Putting It All Together

By strategically planning and implementing curriculum-related transition activities, educators can achieve several key objectives:

1. **Establish Predictable Routines**: Creating consistent routines helps to provide a sense of security and reduce stress for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Predictable transitions can mitigate anxiety and foster a stable learning environment.

2. **Promote Social-Emotional Development**: Engaging children in enjoyable group rituals and cooperative tasks during transitions can enhance their social-emotional growth. These activities encourage teamwork, empathy, and a sense of community among young learners.

3. **Encourage Autonomy**: Structured transition steps empower children to follow routines independently, thereby boosting their self-esteem and developing essential self-help skills. This fosters a sense of competence and confidence in their abilities.

4. **Optimize Learning Opportunities**: Integrating curriculum goals into transition periods transforms these "in-between" times into valuable teaching moments. This approach maximizes instructional time and reinforces learning objectives throughout the day.

In summary, transitions are not merely intervals between activities; they represent opportunities to reinforce educational content, support developmental milestones, and cultivate a harmonious classroom atmosphere.

Transition Activities for Various Age Groups

It is important to create different transition activities for different ages because children's developmental needs, attention spans, and abilities vary significantly from infancy through preschool. By tailoring transitions to each age group, teachers can ensure that these in-between moments are engaging, manageable, and supportive of children's growth. Here are some key factors:

Developmental Milestones and Abilities

- **Infants**: Infants are in a sensory exploration stage, requiring gentle, calming transitions like soft songs or simple visual cues.
- **Toddlers**: Toddlers need more physical movement, short and playful instructions, and simple language prompts to maintain interest and practice emerging skills (e.g., walking to the next area or tidying up).
- **Preschoolers**: Preschoolers can handle more complex, interactive activities, such as counting games, short stories, or structured tasks, that enhance both social and cognitive skills.

Attention Span

- **Younger Children**: Younger children have shorter attention spans, so transitions need to be quick and designed to hold their focus without overwhelming them.
- **Older Preschoolers**: Older preschoolers can engage in slightly longer transition activities (like a short group game) because they can sustain attention and follow multi-step directions.

Language and Communication Skills

- **Infants**: Infants respond best to soothing tones, body language, and repetitive words.
- **Toddlers**: Toddlers benefit from simple sentences, visuals, and songs with easy lyrics.
- **Preschoolers**: Preschoolers can handle more detailed instructions and respond to questions or chants that reinforce vocabulary, helping them build language skills.

Physical Coordination and Motor Skills

- **Infants and Younger Toddlers**: Infants and younger toddlers often need slow, gentle physical transitions, such as being carried or guided by hand.
- **Preschoolers**: Preschoolers have better motor control, so they can engage in transition activities that include hopping, skipping, or carrying objects from one area to another.

Interests and Engagement

- **Preschoolers**: Activities that thrill a preschooler (like a follow-the-leader game) may be too difficult or overstimulating for an infant or younger toddler.
- **Infants and Toddlers**: Designing transitions that capture children's unique interests and match their developmental stage keeps them engaged, reducing resistance or frustration.

Social-Emotional Readiness

- **Infants and Toddlers**: Infants and toddlers rely heavily on nurturing adult support for security during transitions.
- **Preschoolers**: Preschoolers can manage short waits, group cooperation, and even leadership roles (like leading a line to the playground) during transitions.

By customizing transitions for each age group, teachers create moments that are just the right balance of comforting, instructive, and fun, supporting children's overall well-being and development at every stage. In the following section, we will provide specific examples of how to integrate social studies, art, music, and movement into transition activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Transitions for Infants

Transition activities help infants move smoothly between routines (e.g., from playtime to feeding, diapering to naptime) and support their sense of security and predictability. The following are examples of classroom transition activities that are developmentally appropriate for **infants**:

🔄 Gentle and Predictable Cues

- **Singing familiar songs**: Use consistent songs for transitions, like a soft lullaby before nap or a playful tune before tummy time.
- **Verbal cues**: Even though infants may not understand all the words, hearing phrases like "Time to eat now!" or "Let's get ready to sleep" builds language and routine recognition.

🧸 Object-Based Transitions

- **Transitional objects**: A soft toy or blanket that travels with the infant from play to nap or from home to daycare can provide comfort.
- **Visual cues**: Use the same picture or colorful object to represent certain routines (e.g., a sun for outside time, a spoon for feeding time).

🤲 Physical and Sensory Interaction

- **Gentle touch and movement**: Rocking, swinging, or gentle bouncing can ease infants from one activity to another.
- **Massage or hand rubs**: Short infant massages or rubbing lotion on hands/feet can be a calming transition, especially before nap.

🎵 Music and Sound Cues

- **Soundscapes**: Wind chimes or soft instrumental music can signal a change (e.g., music starts to indicate cleanup, or nap is coming).
- **Soft rhythmic drumming**: Tap gently on a drum or use clapping rhythms to transition to group activities.

📚 Interactive Story or Puppet

- **Mini puppet greeting**: A puppet can "tell" infants it's time for a new activity, especially fun for diaper or feeding time.
- **Board books or song books**: A short story or picture book during the transition helps focus their attention and eases change.

🚼 Movement and Carrying Games

- **Lap games or gentle swinging**: Songs like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" while being carried or rocked.
- **"Flying baby" lifts**: Some infants enjoy gentle "ups and downs" as a fun way to shift focus or move spaces.

The chart below shows **infant classroom transitions** with **gentle, developmentally appropriate activities** that support each part of the day. This schedule includes suggestions for transition cues and can easily be adapted to your classroom's needs.

🍼 Infant Transition Activity Schedule

Infant Transition Activity Schedule

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Arrival → Free Play	Greet each infant with soft music and a gentle verbal welcome	Helps infants feel secure and recognize caregivers
Free Play → Diapering	Use a hand puppet to "announce" diaper time, sing a short song	Makes transition fun and builds anticipation
Diapering → Feeding	Hold the infant close and quietly talk about the next step ("Time to eat!")	Encourages calm and connection

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Feeding → Story Time	Show a soft book or a puppet while cleaning up	Signals a shift and keeps infants engaged
Story Time → Nap Time	Dim lights, play lullabies, use consistent phrases ("Nap time now")	Creates predictability and soothes the infant
Nap → Diapering	Wake with a soft voice and a gentle back rub	Prevents startle and supports regulation
Diapering → Outside Time	Use a musical toy or sing an outdoor song while preparing	Builds excitement for outdoor time
Outside Time → Snack	Show picture of snack, sing a "time to eat" song	Helps with routine understanding
Snack → Goodbye Time	Use the same goodbye song and gentle waving	Builds security and closure

Transitions for Toddlers

Transition activities for **toddlers** (ages 1–3) help them move smoothly between routines and support their developing sense of independence, language, and emotional regulation. At this stage, toddlers benefit from repetition, consistency, visual cues, and active involvement in the transition process. To support smooth and meaningful transitions, consider the following age-appropriate strategies for **toddlers**.

⏰ Arrival to Free Play

- **Hello Song with Name Recognition**: Sing a greeting song using each child's name (e.g., "Good morning, Mason!").
- **Picture Schedule Check-In**: Allow toddlers to move their name/photo from "home" to "school" on a visual board.

🧸 Free Play to Clean-Up

- **Clean-Up Song**: Use consistent songs like "Clean-Up, Clean-Up, Everybody Everywhere..."
- **Visual Timer**: Show a sand timer or countdown to give toddlers a visual understanding of time.
- **Job Cards**: Assign simple cleanup jobs (e.g., "You're the puzzle helper!").

📚 Clean-Up to Group Time

- **Marching or Animal Walks**: Transition to circle time using silly movements like tiptoeing or hopping.
- **Musical Cue**: Play a recognizable instrumental sound to signal a change.
- **Story Basket**: Carry a basket with props or books to draw toddlers in as they arrive at group time.

🧼 Diapering/Potty to Snack

- **Sing While You Wait**: Short songs while waiting for turns.
- **Hand-Washing Routine Song**: A simple hand-washing song or rhyme that's repeated daily.
- **Mirror Time**: Toddlers enjoy seeing themselves; place a mirror near the sink to keep them engaged.

🍎 Snack to Outdoor Time

- **Weather Song or Weather Chart**: Talk about the weather and dress accordingly.
- **Hat & Shoe Song**: Create a tune for getting dressed: "One shoe, two shoes, where's your hat?"
- **Countdown with Fingerplay**: "5 Little Monkeys" or similar songs can ease the transition.

🏃 Outdoor to Lunch/Nap

- **Deep Breathing Game**: "Smell the flower... blow out the candle" to help regulate after play.
- **Calm Down Basket**: Soft toys, squishy balls, or small books to soothe before quiet time.
- **Soft Music & Dim Lights**: Gradually adjust the environment to signal that nap time is approaching.

👋 End of Day (Goodbye Time)

- **Goodbye Song**: A consistent, friendly goodbye song ("It's time to say goodbye...").
- **Sharing Basket**: Let toddlers pick something to show their family (drawing, toy, etc.).
- **Wave from the Door or Window**: A physical gesture helps provide closure to the day.

The **Toddler Transition Activity Schedule** below includes the **daily routine**, a **transition cue or activity**, and the **purpose**—all developmentally appropriate for toddlers.

🧒 Toddler Transition Activity Schedule

Toddler Transition Activity Schedule

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Arrival → Free Play	Hello song with names; picture schedule check-in	Builds routine recognition, supports emotional security
Free Play → Clean-Up	Clean-up song; use of visual timer; assign "helper" jobs	Encourages participation, makes transition predictable
Clean-Up → Group Time	Marching like animals; musical cue; story basket to gather children	Makes transition fun and invites group engagement
Diapering/Potty → Snack	Hand-washing song; sing while waiting; mirror at sink	Promotes hygiene, supports patience, and independence

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Snack → Outdoor Time	Talk about weather; hat/shoe dressing song; countdown fingerplay	Builds self-help skills and smooth change in activity
Outdoor Time → Nap	Deep breathing game ("Smell the flower..."); soft music; calm-down basket	Helps regulate energy and calm before nap
Nap → Snack or Play	Gentle wake-up with soft voice; simple stretch or greeting song	Supports smooth re-entry into activity
End of Day (Goodbye Time)	Goodbye song; share something with family; wave goodbye at the door/window	Helps with closure, supports social-emotional connection

Transitions for Preschoolers

These **Classroom Transition Activities for Preschoolers** are tailored to meet the social-emotional, cognitive, and language needs of preschool-aged children (3–5 years). These transitions support self-regulation, independence, and classroom community. The next section presents classroom transition activities that align with the developmental characteristics of **preschoolers**.

🚪 Arrival at Free Play

- **Name Recognition Sign-In**: Children find and place their name card or write their name on a dry-erase board as they arrive.
- **Morning Greeting Song**: Use a consistent song that includes each child's name to create connection and predictability.
- **Picture Schedule Check-In**: Children move their photo/name to the classroom schedule board to see what comes next.

🧹 Free Play to Clean-Up

- **Clean-Up Song**: Use upbeat songs like "Clean-up, clean-up, everybody everywhere..." to signal the end of play.
- **5-Minute Warning**: Give verbal or visual cues ("5 more minutes of playtime!") to prepare children.
- **Helper Jobs**: Assign roles like "Toy Tidy Captain" or "Bookshelf Boss" to make clean-up feel like a team effort.

🧍 Clean-Up to Circle Time

- **Movement Transition**: Invite children to march, hop, tiptoe, or follow an animal movement to the rug.
- **Line-Up Chant**: Use a fun chant: "Hands in the air, touch your nose, it's time to go where the group goes!"
- **Visual Schedule Cards**: Show a circle time picture card to help children visually anticipate what's next.

🎨 Circle Time to Learning Centers

- **Name Sticks or Center Choice Cards**: Children pick their name stick or a card to select their first center.
- **Songs or Rhymes**: Use transition rhymes like "Let's all go to our next place, with a smile on our face!"
- **Color or Shape Matching**: Match the color or shape on the floor to the same one at the learning center.

🍎 Centers to Snack

- **Hand-Washing Song**: Sing a short song while children wash their hands ("Top and bottom, in between…").
- **Snack Helper Job**: Assign a helper to pass out napkins, cups, or help call names to the table.
- **Transition Tally Game**: Count how many children have washed their hands to engage math thinking.

🌤️ Snack to Outside Time

- **Weather Helper Routine**: The weather helper looks outside and reports if it's sunny, cloudy, etc.
- **Getting Ready Song**: Sing a "shoes and jackets" song to help children get dressed independently.
- **Ready, Set, Go Countdown**: Count down from 10 as children line up or get ready for the door.

🧘 Outside Time to Nap or Quiet Time

- **Breathing Games**: Use strategies like "Smell the flower…blow out the candle" to help children calm down.
- **Story Time Wind Down**: Read a short, calming book after coming inside to settle bodies.
- **Stretch and Freeze Game**: A light movement activity that ends with a freeze cue to transition into quiet.

😴 Nap to Afternoon Activities

- **Gentle Wake-Up**: Play soft music or greet each child with a whisper and light touch on the shoulder.
- **Stretch or Yoga Pose**: Guide them through "wake-up stretches" like reaching for the sky or butterfly wings.
- **Transition Object or Toy**: Let them pick a quiet toy or book as they wake and re-enter the activity

👋 End of Day (Goodbye Time)

- **Goodbye Song**: Sing a song like "See you later, alligator!" during departure.
- **Reflection Time**: Ask children to share one thing they enjoyed about the day.
- **Home Connection Bag or Note**: Send something home (drawing, class note) to share with family.

The chart below shows developmentally appropriate **Classroom Transition Activities for Preschoolers** (ages 3–5), designed to help children move smoothly between routines while fostering independence, emotional regulation, and engagement.

🎨 Transition Activities for Preschoolers

Preschool Transition Activities

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Arrival → Free Play	Sign in with name cards or dry-erase boards; morning greeting song	Promotes name recognition, builds a sense of routine
Free Play → Clean-Up	Countdown timer; clean-up song; and assign classroom helper jobs	Supports time awareness, responsibility, and teamwork
Clean-Up → Circle Time	Movement game to the rug (tiptoe, march, hop); transition song	Keeps children engaged and active while changing spaces

Daily Routine	Transition Cue or Activity	Purpose
Circle Time → Centers	Choice cards or name sticks to pick centers; chant or rhyme as they go	Promotes decision-making, builds routine expectations
Centers → Snack	Hand-washing song; line-up with name recognition or classroom job system	Encourages hygiene and reinforces literacy skills
Snack → Outside Time	Weather check routine; dressing song; "Ready, Set, Go!" countdown	Builds self-help and prepares for physical play
Outside → Group Time or Nap	Breathing exercise; stretch-and-freeze game; quiet story read aloud	Helps regulate energy and prepares for calm time
Nap → Afternoon Activity	Gentle wake-up with music or whisper; soft transition game (e.g., yoga)	Supports self-regulation and smooth re-entry into the day
End of Day (Goodbye)	Goodbye song; recall of day's highlights; sticker chart, or home note	Provides closure and connection to family/home

Conclusion

In conclusion, transitions in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms are vital opportunities to foster children's social-emotional growth, independence, and engagement. By weaving Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) into these in-between moments, teachers can reinforce curriculum goals, strengthen classroom community, and build on children's natural curiosity.

Whether it's using

- a gentle song to signal nap time,
- a fun puppet to ease diapering routines,
- or an animal walk to gather children for group time,

the common thread is intentionality—each transition is planned with developmental needs and learning objectives in mind. Through consistent cues, simple routines, and engaging activities, teachers not only reduce stress and confusion but also turn every part of the day into a rich learning experience. Ultimately, thoughtfully designed transitions ensure the daily schedule flows smoothly, allowing children to feel secure, capable, and excited about what comes next.

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1.9: Transitions for Storytime

Learning Objectives

At the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss ideas for transition before and after stories.

Note

Watch for links below to additional readings.

Introduction

In the previous section, you discovered the importance of transitions, how to incorporate SSAMM into transitions, and the best practices during transitions for various age groups.

This section is written from the perspective of a children's librarian. The librarians, Dana Horrocks and Lindsey Krabbenhoft, will explain and demonstrate practical ways of using transitions during storytime.



Figure 1.9.1: Storytime

Mastering Storytime Transitions: Practical Tips from Children's Librarians

Overlooked and undervalued, **transitions are the secret superheroes of any great storytime**. Or heck, anytime you're trying to help kiddos move from one activity to the next! I, for one, had no idea how important transitions were until I started doing Toddler Storytimes on the regular, and now I collect and admire them like gemstones.

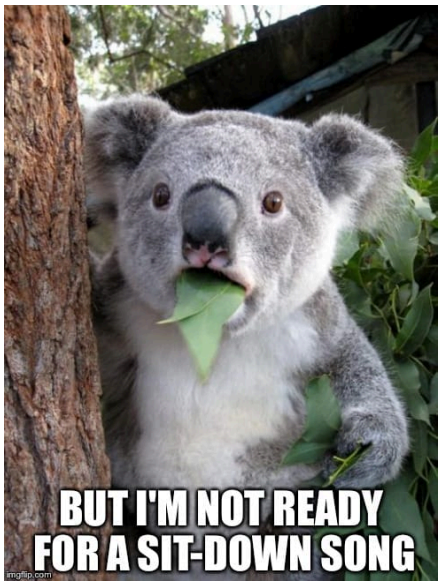


Figure 1.9.2: Storytime transitions. Jbrary.

Think I'm crazy? You only need one koala or kid to give you this look before you wise up to the ways of the transition song, rhyme, or activity.

Storytime Songs and Rhymes

So, let's jump right in. First, I'd like to share some of my favorite songs and rhymes, which can be used when transitioning between parts of your storytime. Many of these have been picked up from other librarians, early childhood educators, and daycare workers. In case you've never noticed, anyone who deals with toddlers and preschoolers on a daily basis basically becomes a pro at transitions.

For an example of this, check out Teaching Mama's awesome list of ideas!

Example Videos

Watch the videos below to view some transition activities you might try!

My Two Hands

Walking, Walking

If You're Ready for a Story

Toddler Stretching Rhymes: Reach for the Ceiling and First You Stretch High

Open, Shut Them

I'm an Airplane

Put Your Wiggles in the Bag

Put Your Hands up High

Everybody Count One

Transition Rhymes

There are many traditional rhymes you can use as transition activities. You can get creative and change the words of any rhyme to fit the themes you are studying or to fit any action you would like the children to do. This version of Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear ends in ***sit down please*:**

Teddy bear, teddy bear turn around
Teddy bear, teddy bear touch the ground
Teddy bear, teddy bear touch the sky
Teddy bear, teddy bear wink one eye
Teddy bear, teddy bear touch your nose
Teddy bear, teddy bear touch your toes
Teddy bear, teddy bear touch your knees
Teddy bear, teddy bear sit down please!



Figure 1.9.3: Preschool musical instruments

Using Instruments During Transitions

The other type of transition comes with its own meme and came up lately in response to our post about rhythm sticks (opens in new window). And this transition is: we're so excited to be using scarves, shakers, and sticks, but how do we mitigate the chaos that is handing out and collecting play items when a bazillion little grabby hands are involved?!

We're so glad to have our colleagues over at Storytime Underground for tricky questions just like this! The Ninjas give some great and varied ideas (opens in new window) for techniques, language ("You get what you get and you don't get upset!"), and even games to get play items out to your folks and back again without tears being shed. We asked our wonderful friends on Twitter and they came up with using a container by the door with a sign that says "Please take one as you come in", leaving piles around your storytime space so folks can help themselves and/or passing around a container or two so families can take one and pass it on. Lisa suggested the song "Goodbye shakers, goodbye shakers, goodbye shakers, I'm glad you came to play OR I'm glad you came today" OR singing "Shakers away, shakers away, time to put our shakers away!" Yay for sharing!

And going beyond storytime, there are lots of fun games and songs to use with school-age kids too. My personal favorite is playing "Would You Rather (opens in new window)," using lots of characters, settings, and animals from books they might be enjoying or the old classic arrange yourselves by height without saying a word challenge. Sigh! When all else fails (with any age!), my newest transition is as simple as it gets: take a deeeeeep breath in, let it out slowly, and take a seat on the floor.

Read the following vignettes to explore how teachers of various age groups transition children to and from storytime.

Preschool Storytime Vignette

Transitioning to and from Storytime in Preschool

Ms. Riley, a preschool teacher, looks at the clock and sees that it's time to transition from free play to storytime. Knowing that transitions can be tricky, she uses a fun and engaging method to gather the children.

"Storytime's about to begin!" she calls out with a warm smile. "Let's hop like bunnies to the carpet!" The children giggle and begin hopping toward the cozy reading area, where a colorful rug and soft cushions await them. As they settle in, Ms. Riley sings a familiar tune:

"Eyes are watching, ears are listening,
Voices quiet, bodies still.
This is how we listen,
This is how we listen,
At storytime, at storytime."

The children naturally join in, their bodies calming as they anticipate the story. With everyone settled, Ms. Riley begins reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* using an expressive voice and engaging pauses.

After the story, Ms. Riley transitions the children to their next activity in a way that keeps them engaged.

"Now, let's pretend we're different animals from the story as we move to our next activity.

Can you slither like a snake to the tables?"

The children excitedly begin moving like different animals, giggling as they make their way to the tables for their next task.

By incorporating movement, music, and imaginative play, Ms. Riley ensures a smooth and engaging transition that keeps the children actively involved while maintaining structure in the classroom.[1]

Toddler Storytime Vignette

Transitioning to and from Storytime with Toddlers

Ms. Jenna, a toddler teacher, notices the morning is moving along, and it's time to transition from playtime to storytime. Knowing that toddlers thrive on routine and engaging cues, she begins singing a familiar song:

"If you're ready for a story, clap your hands!
If you're ready for a story, clap your hands!
If you're ready for a story, find a spot and sit right down,
If you're ready for a story, clap your hands!"

As she sings, she gently pats the floor near the cozy reading area, and toddlers eagerly toddle over, finding their spots. Some clap along while others sway to the rhythm. Ms. Jenna offers a reassuring smile and helps a few children settle onto soft cushions.

Once everyone is seated, she pulls out a favorite book, *Where's Spot?*, and begins reading with animated expressions. She pauses to let the children lift the flaps and react with excitement.

After the story, Ms. Jenna transitions them to their next activity with movement and play.

"It's time to wash hands for snack! Let's wiggle like little puppies to the sink!"

She wiggles her body playfully, and soon, the toddlers are giggling and wiggling along as they make their way to the sink.

By using music, movement, and familiar routines, Ms. Jenna helps make transitions smooth, fun, and developmentally appropriate for her energetic toddlers.[2]

Infant Storytime Vignette

Transitioning Infants To and From Storytime

Ms. Olivia, an infant teacher, knows that even the youngest learners benefit from predictable routines and gentle transitions. As morning playtime winds down, she begins softly humming a familiar lullaby, signaling that it's time for a cozy story.

She moves around the room, gently picking up and soothing infants who are crawling or playing. She sings the following song to the tune of London Bridge as she smiles warmly.

> "It's time for a story, little ones, little ones, little ones. It's time for a story, little ones. It's story time."
>
> She claps her hands softly and sways as she gathers the infants onto a soft rug with a few pillows for support. Some babies crawl over on their own, while others are scooped up and brought to the group.

Once the infants are settled, Ms. Olivia begins reading *Goodnight Moon*, using a calm and rhythmic voice. She pauses to let the babies touch the book, pointing to the pictures and naming objects. "Look, a bunny! Hop, hop!" she says, gently bouncing a baby on her lap. Some infants babble back, while others listen intently or reach for the pages.

As the story ends, Ms. Olivia softly transitions them to their next activity. She begins singing a simple song:

"Storytime is all done, let's stretch up high!
Wiggle your fingers, wave goodbye!"

She gently helps the infants transition, offering soft toys or guiding them toward tummy time or a soothing bottle.

By using music, a calm voice, and gentle gestures, Ms. Olivia ensures a smooth, comforting transition that nurtures the infants' sense of security and engagement.[3]



Figure 1.9.4: Transition Bag

Transition Activities

Think of ways you have seen transitions to and from storytime carried out. What have you tried? What would you like to try? Thinking about transition activities and planning for them in your learning experiences will help your activities run smoothly. Start creating a "tool chest" of transition activities to have ready and available to use when the time arises. You may want to create a bag, box, or some type of container to store song cards and other transition activities for several reasons.

Benefits of Smooth Transitions

- **Smooth Transitions:** Young children often struggle with shifting from one activity to another. Having a set of engaging transition activities helps minimize disruptions and keeps the classroom running smoothly.
- **Minimizing Challenging Behaviors:** Unstructured transition times can lead to restlessness, frustration, or disruptive behaviors. A well-prepared transition activity keeps children engaged and reduces waiting time.
- **Supporting Routine and Predictability:** Preschoolers thrive on consistency. Using familiar transition activities helps create a predictable routine, making them feel secure and confident about what happens next.
- **Encouraging Learning Through Play:** Transitions can be opportunities to reinforce skills like counting, rhyming, movement, and self-regulation. A "tool chest" allows teachers to incorporate fun, meaningful learning moments.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Every day in a preschool classroom is different. A variety of transition strategies ensures that a teacher can quickly adapt to different needs, energy levels, and situations.
- **Building Engagement and Connection:** Singing songs, using movement games, or using interactive chants during transitions helps keep children engaged and fosters a sense of community in the classroom.
- **Developing Professional Readiness:** Having a prepared set of transition activities demonstrates thoughtfulness, organization, and readiness to manage a classroom effectively—important skills for any pre-service teacher entering the field.

By creating a "tool chest" of transition activities, a pre-service teacher equips themselves with practical strategies to support a well-managed, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning environment for young children.[4]

Connecting Transition Activities to the Story

Connecting transition activities before and after a story is crucial for creating a cohesive learning experience for children. Pre-story transitions help set the stage by engaging children's attention and priming them for the theme or lesson of the story, while post-story transitions allow children to reflect on what they've heard and extend their understanding. These transitions create a smooth flow, making the story more relevant and memorable by linking it to prior knowledge or experiences. By thoughtfully connecting these activities, teachers help children engage more deeply with the content and build connections between the story and their own lives. Below are vignettes demonstrating transitions related to the story *Chrysanthemum*—one before the story and one after—to highlight how transitions can enhance engagement and understanding.

Preschool Transition To Storytime Vignette

The preschool classroom is buzzing with energy as children finish up their playtime. The teacher, Ms. Laura, stands near the circle area, holding the book ***Chrysanthemum*** **by Kevin Henkes** in her hands, ready for storytime.

"Okay, friends!" Ms. Laura calls out, her voice calm and welcoming. **"It's time for our story. Let's get our bodies ready to listen."**

She gives the children a gentle reminder about quieting their bodies: **"Let's take a deep breath, in through our noses, and out through our mouths. Can we do that together? Ready? In... and out... Great!"**

Ms. Laura smiles as she notices the children beginning to slow down. She then invites the children to gather around the reading carpet, using a playful, soft voice. **"Can you find a soft spot on the carpet to sit, just like a little chrysanthemum flower finding a sunny place to grow?"**

As the children begin to sit down, Ms. Laura encourages them to use their imagination. **"Imagine your body is like a flower stem, gently swaying in the breeze as you sit. Let's take one more big deep breath as we settle in."**

Once everyone is seated comfortably, she continues, **"In our story today, we're going to meet a little mouse named Chrysanthemum, and she has a very special name—just like all of you have special names too. I wonder if Chrysanthemum will feel proud of her name or if she'll have to work through some feelings. Let's find out together."**

The children's attention is now fully focused on Ms. Laura as she opens the book, the soft hum of excitement filling the air as they eagerly await the story to begin.[5]

This transition activity connects the children's energy from playtime to a calm and focused state, with elements of imaginative thinking to engage their attention before diving into the story.

Preschool Transition FROM Storytime to Play Centers Vignette

As the last page of *Chrysanthemum* is turned, Ms. Laura closes the book gently, looking around at the children with a smile. **"Wow, wasn't that a beautiful story? What a journey Chrysanthemum went on to feel proud of her name!"** she says, as the children nod and murmur in agreement.

"Now, let's think about our own names," Ms. Laura continues. **"Just like Chrysanthemum, each of you has a name that's very special. What makes your name important to you?"**

The children are given a moment to think, and some raise their hands to share. **"My name is Emily, and I love it because it's the name of my grandma,"** one child says. "**My name is Max, and I was named after my dad,"** says another.

Ms. Laura nods and says, **"I love hearing about your special names! Now, we're going to move to our play centers where we'll have a chance to do some fun activities all about our names."**

She leads the transition with a warm invitation: **"In the centers today, you'll get to work with your names in different ways! You can make a name necklace, decorate a name card, or even build the letters of your name with blocks. I can't wait to see how you all express what's special about your names!"**

As the children begin to stand and move toward the centers, Ms. Laura gently reminds them, **"Remember, just like Chrysanthemum found a way to be proud of her name, you can show how proud you are of yours, too! Let's get started and have some fun exploring our names!"**

This transition smoothly ties the book's theme to the play centers, encouraging the children to reflect on their names and feel pride as they engage in activities related to their identity.[6]

Toddler Transtion To Storytime Vignette

As the toddlers finish their morning activities, Ms. Maria gathers them in a cozy corner of the classroom, where soft cushions are scattered on the floor. The room is quiet now, and a few curious eyes are looking toward her.

"Okay, friends, it's time for a special story," Ms. Maria says with a smile, holding up *The Family Book* by Todd Parr. The toddlers, some still wiggling with energy, glance at the book, their interest piqued by its bright colors and bold illustrations.

Ms. Maria begins the transition with a calming gesture, patting her lap. **"Let's take a deep breath together,"** she encourages. **"Ready? In through your nose... and out through your mouth. Can you feel your body get a little quieter?"**

The children follow along, their movements slowing as they sit on the cushions. She holds the book up high, showing them the cover, and continues, **"This book is about families, all kinds of families, just like yours! Everyone is different, and that's what makes each family special. Let's discover what makes them so unique."**

As the children settle, Ms. Maria opens the book to the first page. "Look at this family! What do you see? Can you spot a family with a pet dog?" she asks. The toddlers begin to lean in, their attention drawn to the colorful pages as she reads the first few lines. With each turn of the page, the children's faces light up, recognizing pieces of their own families in the book.

With the gentle transition, the toddlers are now fully engaged, ready to explore the world of families through the story. The warm, inviting environment, combined with the slow pacing and interactive questions, helps them feel calm and excited for the adventure of storytime.

This vignette creates a calm, engaging transition from activity to storytime, making the toddlers feel comfortable and curious about the upcoming story.[7]

Now, let's explore how a toddler teacher connects transition activities before and after the story, The Family Book, in the vignettes below.

Toddler Transition FROM Storytime Vignette

As the last page of *The Family Book* by Todd Parr is turned, Ms. Maria gently closes the book with a smile. The toddlers, who had been listening intently, now started to stir, some chattering softly about the different families they saw in the book.

"Wasn't that a fun story?" Ms. Maria asks, her voice warm and calm. "**We learned about all kinds of families—families with pets, families that live in different places, and families who love each other in so many ways!"**

The toddlers nod and murmur in agreement. Ms. Maria stands up and claps her hands softly to get their attention. **"Now, it's time for us to play! We have some fun centers ready for you, and I know you're going to have a great time."**

She walks toward the play area, where different centers are set up, each related to the family theme they just read about. **"Over here, we have the family dollhouse with mommy, daddy, and baby dolls. You can create your own family and tell stories just like we did in the book!"** she says, pointing to a table with toy figures and accessories.

"Over here, we have a pretend kitchen, where you can cook meals for your family. You can pretend you're a mommy, daddy, or a big sister helping out!" Ms. Maria gestures to the next station, a kitchen set with toy pots and utensils.

She pauses for a moment and looks around at the toddlers. "**Before we start, let's take one last deep breath, just like we did before storytime. Ready? In... and out... Now, you can head to the center that calls to you the most. You're going to have so much fun exploring and pretending with your friends!"**

With excitement building, the toddlers begin to move toward the play areas, some going straight for the dollhouse, others to the kitchen set. As they engage in pretend play, they bring to life the families they saw in the story, further deepening their understanding and enjoyment of the theme.

This vignette smoothly transitions the toddlers from the calm, focused activity of storytime to the active and imaginative play centers, making the experience engaging and relevant to what they just learned.[8]

In the following infant vignettes, you'll see how transitions are effectively connected to the book I Love You Like No Otter for both a small group of infants and an individual infant. These vignettes illustrate how thoughtful transitions before and after storytime can support engagement, comfort, and a deeper connection to the story for infants.

Infant Transition TO Storytime Vignette

Introduction:

Infant storytimes can be both **individual** OR **small group experiences**, each providing unique opportunities for engagement and connection. Whether reading to one infant or a small group, the transition into storytime is important to create a calm and interactive environment that fosters a love for books and language.

Below is an example of an individual storytime:

One-on-One Reading:

The room is soft and quiet, with the gentle hum of calming music in the background. Ms. Sarah sits on a cushioned mat with little Emily, who is resting comfortably in her lap. The two of them share a moment of calm as Ms. Sarah smiles down at Emily, gently holding *I Love You Like No Otter* by Rose Rossner in her hands.

"Are you ready for a story, Emily?" Ms. Sarah asks in a soothing, sing-song voice. Emily looks up, her curious eyes already drawn to the book. Ms. Sarah slowly raises the book so Emily can see the cover. “Look, sweet girl, it’s a story about love—just like the love we share, just like the otters in this book!”

She gently taps the cover, pointing to the adorable otter illustration. Emily reaches out a tiny hand, her fingers grazing the page as Ms. Sarah continues, “This otter loves its friend so much. Can you see the love?” she says softly, speaking to Emily as if sharing a secret between them.

Ms. Sarah opens the book, keeping it close to Emily’s face so she can see the pictures clearly. With a tender voice, she begins to read the story, letting each word linger with warmth and affection. She softly mimics the motions of hugging, lightly wrapping her arms around Emily as she reads about the otter hugging its friend. Emily coos and giggles softly, her eyes wide as she follows the motion of the pictures and the gentle rhythm of Ms. Sarah’s voice.

Every now and then, Ms. Sarah pauses, allowing Emily to touch the pages, feeling the smooth texture and vibrant colors. The space between them feels full of love, comfort, and connection as they share this special, quiet moment together.

Now, let’s take a look at an example of a small-group storytime:

Small Group Reading:

The room is quiet, with soft music playing in the background. The babies, some resting in their caregiver's lap and others sitting on soft mats, begin to settle as Ms. Sarah gently claps her hands to get their attention.

“Alright, little ones,” she says in a calm, soothing voice, “it’s time for our special story.” She slowly lifts *I Love You Like No Otter* by Rose Rossner and shows the cover to the group. “Look, sweet babies, it’s a story about how much we love each other, just like the otters do! Can you see the otter hugging its friend?”

Ms. Sarah smiles warmly as she places the book on her lap and gently pats it, encouraging the babies to focus on the colorful images. She softly taps the page, guiding their gaze as she begins, “This little otter loves its friend so much. Can you feel the love, too?” She pauses, giving them time to take in the pictures.

As she begins to read the story, Ms. Sarah uses a soft, melodic voice, pointing to the otter and its friends with gentle motions that mimic the hugs and love expressed in the book. Some of the babies coo softly, looking at the book, while others reach out to touch the pictures, smiling at the familiar faces.

With each turn of the page, the soothing rhythm of Ms. Sarah’s voice and the bright, friendly illustrations help the infants relax further, their attention drawn to the comforting theme of love and connection. The room feels peaceful, with the babies engaged and ready to experience the warmth of the story.[9]

Infant Transition FROM Storytime Vignette

Introduction:

Infant storytimes can be both individual and small group experiences, each providing unique opportunities for engagement and connection. Whether reading to one infant or a small group, the **transition from storytime is important to help infants move smoothly to the next activity, whether it’s a nap for an individual or play centers for a small group.**

One-on-One Reading Transition to Nap:

As the story ends, Ms. Sarah gently closes the book and looks down at Emily with a soft smile. **“What a lovely story, Emily. Now, let’s get cozy for your nap.” Ms. Sarah picks up Emily carefully, cradling her close to her chest. “It’s time to rest now, sweet girl. We’ll be right here when you wake up.”**

With soft, calming words, Ms. Sarah gently lays Emily down in her crib, making sure she’s comfortable and secure. She softly strokes Emily’s head and hums a gentle lullaby as the room quiets, helping Emily transition smoothly into a restful nap.

Now, let’s take a look at an example of a small group transition from storytime to play centers:

Small Group Reading Transition to Play Centers:

As the story comes to an end, Ms. Sarah gently closes the book and smiles down at the group. **"Wasn't that a beautiful story, little ones? Now, it's time to play!"** she announces with a soft, inviting tone.

She claps her hands gently, signaling that it's time for the next activity. *"Let's head over to the play centers where you can explore with your friends. You can play with the family dolls, pretend to cook in the kitchen, or enjoy some sensory play. There's so much fun to be had!"*

Ms. Sarah helps each baby transition to their chosen center, guiding them gently toward the various activities. The babies begin to explore, each one engaging with the toys and activities in their own way, while Ms. Sarah observes and supports them as they enjoy their time.[10]

Conclusion

In conclusion, transitions for storytime—whether in an infant, toddler, or preschool setting—are all about using fun, engaging cues to guide children smoothly between activities. Simple songs, rhymes, and gentle movements help set the tone, capture attention, and build predictability. By planning these brief yet impactful moments, teachers can reduce challenging behaviors, nurture children's excitement for learning, and ensure that every storytime begins and ends on a positive, playful note.

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2: SSAMM AND PLAY-BASED LEARNING

Introduction

This chapter will develop your understanding of **Course Competency 2: Examine the critical role of play-based learning as it relates to SSAMM.**

Learning Objectives

This chapter will explore:

- how hands-on, creative activities promote child development
- the teacher/care giver's role in facilitation of SSAMM play
- how SSAMM play opportunities foster development/learning in all domains across WI Model Early Learning Standards continuum
- how observational skills support assessment of and curriculum planning for SSAMM
- how children play across all age groups during SSAMM activities

2.1: Promoting Child Development Through Hands-On Activities

2.2: The Importantance of Play and the Teacher's Role

2.3: SSAMM Play Fosters Development in All Domains

2.4: SSAMM Curriculum Planning and Assessment Using Observational Skill

2.5: SSAMM Play Across All Ages

2.6: Social Studies Play in Early Childhood

2.7: Art Play in Early Childhood

2.8: Music Play in Early Childhood

2.9: Movement Play in Early Childhood

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2.1: Promoting Child Development Through Hands-On Activities

Introduction

Children are born observers—curious, energetic, and eager to make sense of the world around them. From the very beginning, they are **active participants in their own learning**, not just recipients of adult knowledge. They learn best by ***doing***: *exploring, experimenting, and engaging in hands-on experiences.* Whether painting, building, singing, or pretending to be a community helper, children are naturally discovering how things work and how to express themselves.

This understanding is supported by **Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)**, as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). DAP encourages early childhood professionals to be intentional in how they design learning environments and interact with children, creating opportunities that support curiosity, creativity, and meaningful exploration. Under this approach, learning is rooted in **active, play-based experiences** that give children abundant chances to develop essential skills.

Through hands-on, creative play, children grow across all areas of development—building their thinking, communication, physical coordination, emotional strength, social skills, and imagination.



Figure 2.1.1: Play is active learning. (Image by HaiRobe on pixabay)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify how hands-on, creative activities promote child development

What Are the Developmental Domains?

When we look at how young children grow and learn, we can break it down into six important areas called developmental domains. These domains help us understand the different ways children develop from birth through age eight.

Physical Development

Physical development is about how children's bodies grow and what they can do physically. This includes:

- **Gross Motor Skills**: Activities involving large muscle groups, such as running, jumping, and climbing.
- **Fine Motor Skills**: Activities involving smaller muscle groups, such as holding a pencil, cutting with scissors, or building with blocks.
- **Coordination and Balance**: Developing the ability to move smoothly and maintain stability.
- **Strength Building**: Increasing muscle power and endurance.

Enhancing Physical Development Through Creative Activities:

- **Movement activities** such as dance, games, and dramatic reenactments in **social studies** help children refine their gross motor skills and spatial awareness.
- **Art projects**—whether it's painting, cutting, or assembling materials—enhance fine motor coordination.
- **Music activities** that incorporate clapping, instrument play, and rhythmic movement further strengthen both gross and fine motor skills by encouraging coordinated, expressive physical action.



Figure 2.1.2: Gross Motor Skills is licensed under CC by 1.0

Social Development

Social development is about how children interact with other people. It includes:

Social development is about how children interact with other people. It includes:

- **Making Friends**: Building relationships with peers.
- **Sharing and Taking Turns**: Learning to share resources and wait for one's turn.
- **Working in Groups**: Collaborating with others to achieve common goals.
- **Understanding Social Rules**: Recognizing and adhering to societal norms and expectations.
- **Showing Respect and Care**: Demonstrating empathy and consideration for others.

Enhancing Social Development Through Creative Activities

- **Social Studies Activities**: Exploring cultural traditions or role-playing community roles encourages children to learn about different perspectives and build empathy.
- **Collaborative Art Projects**: Working together on art projects fosters sharing, listening, and turn-taking.
- **Group Music Sessions and Movement Games**: These activities create natural settings for practicing social skills and engaging in meaningful interactions, fostering strong social bonds and communication skills.

Emotional Development

Emotional development involves recognizing and managing emotions. Children learn how to:

- **Express Feelings in Healthy Ways**: Communicate emotions effectively.
- **Build Self-Confidence**: Develop a positive self-image.
- **Handle Frustration**: Manage stress and setbacks.
- **Become More Independent**: Gain autonomy in daily activities.
- **Develop Empathy**: Understand and respond to the feelings of others.

Emotional development is closely related to social development. They are so closely related that some frameworks of child development, such as the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), refer to them as socio-emotional development or social-emotional development.

Enhancing Emotional Development Through Creative Activities

- **Art and Music**: Powerful media for emotional expression. When children paint, they have an outlet to express feelings that may be difficult to verbalize.
- **Music and Movement Activities**: Allow children to convey emotion through rhythm, tone, and gesture, which can boost self-awareness and stress relief.
- **Social Studies Role-Playing**: Historical or community scenarios help children explore various emotional responses in a safe, structured environment, enhancing their ability to manage and understand their own feelings as well as those of others.

Language and Communication Development

This domain focuses on how children understand and use language. It includes:

- **Listening**: Developing the ability to understand spoken language.
- **Speaking**: Learning to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly.
- **Reading and Writing**: Beginning skills in literacy, including recognizing letters, words, and eventually forming sentences.
- **Vocabulary Growth**: Expanding the number of words children know and use.
- **Following Directions**: Understanding and executing verbal instructions.
- **Asking and Answering Questions**: Engaging in dialogue to seek information and clarify understanding.
- **Carrying on Conversations**: Participating in back-and-forth exchanges with others.

Enhancing Language and Communication Through Creative Activities

- **Social Studies**: Storytelling, discussions about cultural traditions, and exploring community roles enrich children's vocabulary and narrative skills.
- **Art Activities**: Prompt children to describe their creations and express ideas.
- **Music**: Introduces rhythm, rhyme, and repetition that support language acquisition.
- **Movement Activities**: Encourage non-verbal communication and following group directions, reinforcing the connection between physical action and verbal expression.



Figure 2.1.3: Reading Together is licensed under CC by 1.0

Creative Development

The creative domain supports children in expressing ideas, emotions, and imagination through art, music, movement, and dramatic play. It encourages:

- **Curiosity**: Exploring new ideas and concepts.
- **Risk-Taking**: Trying new things without fear of failure.
- **Flexible Thinking**: Adapting to new situations and thinking outside the box.
- **Problem-Solving**: Finding solutions to challenges.

A safe environment that allows mistakes helps children feel confident to explore and create. Through creative activities, they build self-esteem, develop both fine and gross motor skills, and strengthen symbolic thinking—a key foundation for reading and writing.

Creativity also connects with other learning areas like math, science, and social studies, helping children make decisions, explore cause and effect, and express themselves in meaningful ways.

Enhancing Creative Development Through Open-Ended Art Experiences

Open-ended art experiences offer numerous opportunities for learning. Consider the difference between open and closed-ended questions:

- **Closed-Ended Questions**: Tend to result in one-word answers and limit children's thinking.
- **Open-Ended Questions**: Challenge children to use creative and critical thinking skills.

This same concept applies to closed vs. open-ended art (also known as product and process art):

- **Closed-Ended Projects**: Activities such as coloring in a coloring book or gluing pre-cut pieces to make a craft may support fine motor skills.
- **Open-Ended Art**: Builds fine motor skills while challenging children's creative thinking. For example, allowing children to create their own designs with various materials encourages exploration and innovation.

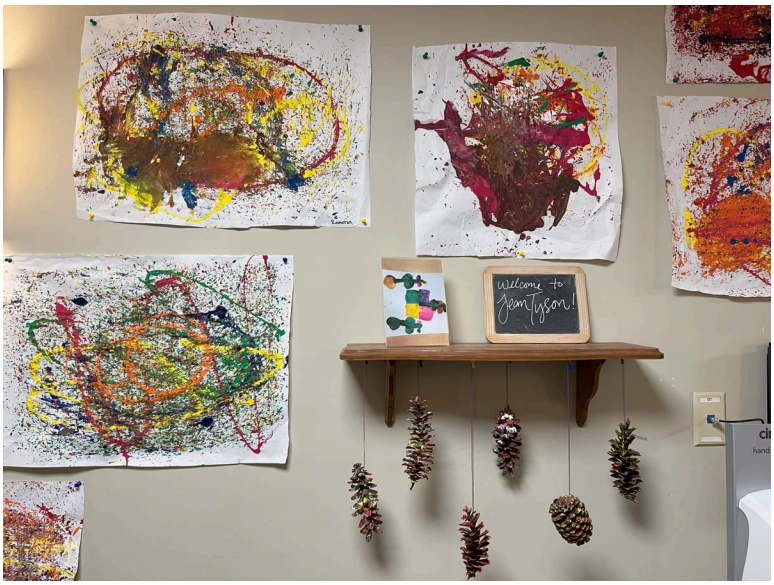


Figure 2.1.4: "Fall art and pinecones". is licensed by Heather Carter CC-BY-SA

Enhancing Creative Development Through Creative Activities:

Art, music, and movement are the core of creative expression. Social studies activities that explore diverse cultures, traditions, and community narratives spark imaginative thinking by exposing children to a variety of perspectives. Whether it's designing a craft project, composing a simple song, or creating a dance based on a historical theme, these activities inspire children to experiment with ideas and express themselves in new and innovative ways. This exploration fosters both original thought and problem-solving skills.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development is how children **think, learn,** and **solve problems**. It includes using memory, asking questions, making decisions, and figuring out how things work. This domain supports learning in areas like **math, science, and cause-and-effect thinking.**

Enhancing Cognitive Development Through Creative Activities:

- **Social studies activities** encourage **inquiry-based learning by prompting children to ask questions about their communities, history, and societal roles.**
- **Art projects** require children to **make choices about colors, shapes, and materials, stimulating problem-solving and decision-making skills**.
- **Music** supports **cognitive growth through pattern recognition, memory, and sequencing**.
- **Movement activities** improve **spatial awareness and strategic thinking.**

Together, these creative avenues enrich children's cognitive development by engaging multiple senses and encouraging critical thought.



Figure 2.1.5: Playing Together is licensed under CC by 1.0

Learning Through Play

Understanding the developmental domains helps us see the many ways children grow—physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.

Each domain represents a different area of learning that is important for a child's overall development. While we can look at each domain separately, **it's important to remember that children do not learn in isolated ways**. For young children, play is the most natural and powerful way to support growth in all these areas. Through play, children make sense of their world, explore new ideas, practice skills, and build relationships. **Play-based learning allows them to engage with their surroundings, try out ideas, and learn in a way that feels meaningful and fun.**



Figure 2.1.6: Playing in Water is licensed under CC by 1.0

How Hands-On Creative Activities Promote Child Development

Hands-on creative activities—like painting, building, music, dancing, dramatic play, and crafting—**are especially effective in supporting children's development.** These types of play-based experiences are more than just fun; **they help children grow across all developmental domains.**

UNLIKE flashcards, coloring sheets, or worksheets, which often rely on memorization or following directions without much creativity, **hands-on activities engage the whole child.** They allow for open-ended exploration, active participation, and problem-solving. For example, instead of tracing letters on a worksheet, a child might form letters out of playdough or write them in sand. Rather than coloring in a pre-drawn picture, a child can use a variety of materials to create their own artwork. **These experiences are more meaningful because they connect to what children are curious about and allow them to take ownership of their learning.**

In addition, incorporating social studies, art, music, and movement into hands-on activities broadens children's experiences even further:

- **Social Studies:** Through explorations of community roles, cultural traditions, and historical narratives, children learn to appreciate diversity, develop empathy, and understand their place in the world.
- **Art:** Creative art projects encourage self-expression, critical thinking, and the development of fine motor skills while providing a safe space for children to experiment with ideas.
- **Music:** Music fosters auditory discrimination, memory, and language skills. Group music activities also promote cooperation and rhythm, key elements in both physical and cognitive development.
- **Movement:** Movement activities enhance physical coordination, balance, and spatial awareness, while also offering a channel for emotional release and social interaction.

When children engage in hands-on, creative activities, they are:

- Practicing real-world problem-solving
- Learning to talk, listen, and express feelings
- Growing stronger bodies and minds
- Becoming creative thinkers
- Building confidence and friendships

That's why play isn't just fun—it's essential for helping young children grow into well-rounded, healthy people. **Hands-on experiences** in social studies, art, music, and movement are **powerful tools for helping children develop in every domain**. **These activities are open-ended, child-led, and filled with opportunities to explore, express, and connect.**

Conclusion

Play is not just a break from learning—**it is how young children learn best.** By engaging in **hands-on, creative activities,** children **grow across all developmental domains** in ways that are natural, joyful, and deeply meaningful. When educators and caregivers create playful learning environments enriched with social studies, art, music, and movement activities, they give children **the tools to explore their interests, solve problems, express themselves, and build essential life skills. Supporting play-based learning means supporting the whole child—mind, body, and heart.**

Reflection

Did this reading change your mind or challenge your thinking about worksheets, coloring pages, and flashcards? Why or why not?

How would you explain the importance of hands-on creative activities to the development of young children?

- What might you say to parents?
- What might you say to a director or principal?

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2.2: The Importantance of Play and the Teacher's Role

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to

- Define play
- Discuss the importance of play in learning
- Explain the teacher's role in play
- Identify ways teachers can foster play

Introduction

Play is a fundamental aspect of childhood that goes beyond mere entertainment. It serves as a crucial mechanism for learning and development. Through play, children engage in activities that inspire imagination, facilitate creativity, foster problem-solving skills, and promote the development of new abilities. It builds confidence and self-esteem, allows for free exploration of the environment, and encourages learning through hands-on and sensory experiences.

Research has shown that moments often dismissed as "just play" are actually significant opportunities for active learning (Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2009; Jones and Reynolds 2011; Zigler, Singer, and Bishop-Josef 2004; Elkind 2007). During play, children explore the physical properties of materials and experiment with various actions, transformations, and representations. This active engagement with their surroundings begins from birth and continues to shape their understanding of the world.

This perspective on play as a vital component of learning informs the role of educators working with young children from birth to five years old.

Observing and Listening: The Beginning of Teaching and Learning

Early childhood teaching and learning begin with teachers watching and listening to discover how infants and young children actively engage in making sense of their everyday encounters with people and objects. When teachers observe and listen with care, infants and young children reveal clues about their thinking, their feelings, or their intentions. Children's actions, gestures, and words illuminate what they are trying to figure out or how they attempt to make sense of the attributes, actions, and responses of people and objects. Effective early childhood teaching requires teachers to recognize how infants and young children actively search for meaning, making sense of ideas and feelings.



Figure 2.2.1: This teacher has an opportunity to discover how this child is understanding her experience.[1]

When teaching is viewed in this light, children become **active participants alongside teachers** in negotiating the course of the curriculum. Families who entrust their children to the care and guidance of early childhood teachers also become active participants in this process. Shared participation by everyone in the work of creating lively encounters with learning allows a dynamic exchange of information and ideas—from child to adult, from adult to child, from adult to adult, and from child to child. The perspective of each (child, family, teacher) informs the other, and each learns from the other. Each relationship (child with family, child with teacher, child with child, and family with teacher) is reciprocal, with each participant giving and receiving from the other and each adding to the other's learning and understanding.[2] The image below shows the reciprocal, back-and-forth nature of teaching and learning.

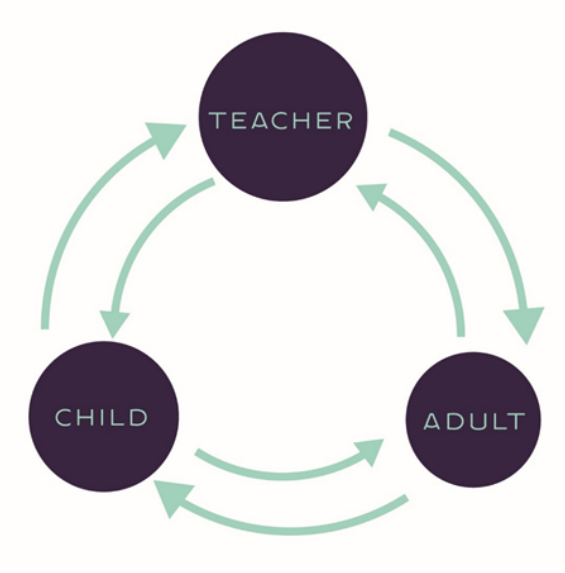


Figure 2.2.2: Each perspective informs the other.3

The Importance of Play

The *Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia* discusses the benefits of play:

Play is a valued process, not only for enjoyment and leisure but also for **learning**. Through play, children develop a sense of identity and an understanding of their social and cultural worlds. Children use play to explore and understand cultures, communities, and friendships. We gain a lot through playing, not just as children but also as adults.

Recent **brain research has heralded the benefits of a stimulating, play-based environment in encouraging the brain to grow and develop** (Diamond 1988). Low stress levels and high engagement combine to nourish neural development. Research by Vandell and others (2005) demonstrates how school-aged care environments achieve this through the combination of high intrinsic motivation and challenge, effort, and enjoyment. Lester and Russell (2009) identified the flexibility and plasticity of the brain, which develops through play and increases the potential for learning later in life.

The intellectual and cognitive benefits of playing have been well documented. **Children who engage in quality play experiences are more likely to:**

- Have well-developed memory skills and language development,
- Have the ability to regulate their behavior, leading to enhanced adjustment to school and academic learning.

Play also provides children with an opportunity to just 'be'.[4]

Pause to Reflect

What does it mean to just be? Consider a time, either as a child or an adult, when you had an opportunity to just be. What facilitated the opportunity? What feelings did you experience? What might this mean for young children?

Supporting Learning Through Play

As we learned in the previous section, **play** is much more than fun—it's a **vital way that children explore the world, experiment with ideas, and build important skills.** When children play, they aren't just passing time; they are actively discovering how things work and how to interact with others. Research shows that play-based environments help lower stress, encourage creativity, and even support brain development, setting a strong foundation for future learning. **But how do teachers plan and support play to foster growth and development? What strategies can be used to transform everyday play into rich learning experiences that build on children's natural curiosity?**

Supporting Play in the Classroom

Creating a supportive play environment means more than just filling a room with toys. It involves:

Selecting Materials and Equipment:

- **Variety of Tools**: Teachers choose a variety of tools and open-ended materials that invite children to explore, experiment, and use their imaginations. These resources are carefully selected to be safe, age-appropriate, and engaging. The idea is to offer materials that stimulate curiosity and allow for a wide range of activities—from role-playing and problem-solving to creative construction.

Designing a Stimulating Environment:

- **Thoughtful Arrangement**: An effective learning space is thoughtfully arranged so that every corner of the classroom encourages exploration. Whether it's a cozy reading nook, a well-stocked play area, or an outdoor space for active play, the environment is set up to support children's natural desire to learn by doing. Such spaces give children the chance to test ideas, interact with peers, and gradually build confidence in their abilities.

Being Intentional:

- **Purposeful Actions**: Teachers act purposefully with a clear goal and a well-thought-out plan when setting up and facilitating play. For example, when offering dress-ups, educators provide a wide selection of costumes to ensure that all children have opportunities to engage in rich group play and to promote respect for diversity and choice. This intentional approach involves explaining what and why resources are chosen, establishing routines, and arranging materials in a way that minimizes conflicts over sharing while maximizing creative exploration.

The Teacher's Role: Before, During, and After Play

How do teachers plan and support play to foster growth and development? What strategies can be used to transform everyday play into rich learning experiences that build on children's natural curiosity?

In reality, teachers do much more than simply watch children or check their phones from the sidelines—they engage in a thoughtful, proactive process of designing, facilitating, and reflecting on play. Every play session is carefully planned and executed with clear objectives in mind, ensuring that children are supported, challenged, and encouraged to explore, create, and learn. Explore how they do this below.

Before Play: Teachers lay the groundwork for a successful play session by carefully planning and preparing the environment. This proactive process ensures that children have everything they need to explore, experiment, and learn during play.

Planning and Preparation:

- **Preparing the Environment:**
  - Select and rotate materials that match children's interests and developmental needs.
  - Arrange the classroom to be inviting, safe, and stimulating, creating areas for both group and individual activities.
- **Scheduling Uninterrupted Time:**
  - Set aside dedicated play sessions—typically between 30 and 90 minutes—so that children can fully immerse themselves in their activities without feeling rushed.
- **Setting Learning Objectives:**
  - Identify potential learning outcomes or skills to support during play, such as problem-solving, collaboration, or creativity.
  - Plan a balance between free exploration and guided discovery to extend children's learning.
- **Anticipating Needs and Safety:**
  - Ensure materials are easily accessible and that the play area is free of hazards.
  - Organize supplies and equipment in a way that promotes independence and smooth transitions between activities.

By thoroughly planning and preparing the play environment, teachers create the essential conditions that allow children to engage in meaningful, self-directed learning experiences. The vignette below shares how one preschool teacher plans for play.

Vignette: Preparing for Play

Laying the Groundwork for a PLAY: Community Play Centers

In preparation for exciting "Community" play centers, Ms. Rivera begins by carefully planning and setting up her classroom. She selects a diverse range of materials that will later allow children to explore various community roles. For instance, she gathers costumes representing firefighters, doctors, teachers, and store clerks, along with props such as toy money, miniature vehicles, maps, and art supplies for creating community badges. Each item is chosen not only for safety and age-appropriateness but also for its ability to spark curiosity and support a wide range of imaginative activities.

Ms. Rivera then thoughtfully arranges her classroom into a stimulating "Community Corner." She creates distinct areas—a cozy reading nook stocked with books about local heroes, an art station for designing personalized items, and a designated space for role-play—that invite children to interact and explore at their own pace. In addition, she schedules a dedicated, uninterrupted play session of 60 minutes, ensuring that the children will have ample time to fully immerse themselves in the experience without feeling rushed.

Beyond physical preparation, Ms. Rivera sets clear learning objectives for the session. She identifies the skills she hopes the children will develop, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and an understanding of community roles, and she plans a balance between free exploration and guided discovery. By anticipating potential safety issues and ensuring that all materials are easily accessible, she organizes the space in a way that promotes independence and smooth transitions between activities.

Through this meticulous and intentional planning, Ms. Rivera creates a foundation that not only supports the children's immediate play experience but also sets the stage for meaningful, self-directed learning.

During Play

Teachers play an active role during play, engaging with children to guide their learning while fostering independence and creativity. They work to ensure that every play session becomes a rich opportunity for exploration and growth.

Observing and Guiding

Observing:

- **Monitor Children Closely**: Understand what interests them.
- **Identify Challenges**: Recognize difficulties they might encounter during play.

Encouraging Inquiry:

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions**: Prompt deeper thinking and creativity (e.g., “What do you think will happen if…?”).
- **Invite Reflection**: Encourage children to reflect on their choices and explore new ideas.

Mediating and Supporting:

- **Conflict Resolution**: Step in when conflicts arise to help children negotiate and resolve issues.
- **Extend Learning**: Offer suggestions or new perspectives without taking over the play.

Promoting Independence:

- **Space for Experimentation**: Allow children to learn from their own discoveries.
- **Ensure Each Child’s Voice is Heard**: Support individual expression and exploration.

Fostering a Positive Environment

Role Modeling:

- **Act as a Positive Example**: Demonstrate how to engage with materials and play activities.
- **Model Learning Activities**: Show clear strategies and techniques step-by-step.

Selective Participation:

- **Enhance Learning**: Join in the play only when it enhances the learning experience.
- **Connect Ideas to Real-World Concepts**: Encourage children by linking their ideas to broader concepts.

Extending Learning:

- **Introduce Additional Materials**: Modify activities to build on children’s interests.
- **Provide Gentle Guidance**: Help children make connections between their play and broader learning objectives.

By employing these strategies during play, teachers ensure children are supported in their exploration, build confidence, and develop critical social and problem-solving skills. These detailed steps help make every play session a meaningful and enriching learning experience. The vignette below highlights the roles Ms. Rivera assumes while the children are engaged in play.

Vignette: Teacher Engagement During Play

During the “Community” play centers, Ms. Rivera actively engages with her students as they immerse themselves in role-playing and creative exploration. She moves around the room, carefully observing how the children interact with the diverse costumes, props, and play stations she has set up. As she watches, she notes which community roles spark the most curiosity and where a few children might be facing challenges in negotiating roles or sharing materials.

Ms. Rivera gently steps in to encourage inquiry, asking open-ended questions such as, “What do you think will happen if we try a new role?” or “How can you use this costume to show what a community helper does?” Her questions prompt the children to reflect on their choices and experiment with new ideas. When conflicts arise, she mediates calmly, offering suggestions and guiding the children to negotiate solutions on their own, ensuring every voice is heard.

Throughout the session, Ms. Rivera models learning by demonstrating how to use a prop correctly or by showing a step-by-step example of a game, effectively connecting their imaginative play to real-world concepts. She participates selectively, joining in when it enhances the learning experience, but always allowing the children the space to lead their own play.

Additionally, as new interests emerge, she introduces extra materials or tweaks the activity on the fly, reinforcing that learning is an ever-evolving process. In doing so, Ms. Rivera fosters an environment where independence and creativity thrive, making every moment of play a rich opportunity for exploration and growth.

Play Facilitation[5]

During play, you can...



Be a player. Take on a role in the play and follow the children's lead.



Be a mirror. Describe in detail what the children are doing, using rich vocabulary. E.g., "You're drawing a curved yellow line using the thin paintbrush..."



Be a connector. Scaffold children to connect with each other around a common goal or play theme.



Be a steering wheel. When play becomes unproductive, repetitive, or unsafe, steer it back in a positive direction.



Be a rubber band. Stretch and extend the play through open-ended questions, embedding vocabulary, and reinforcing the teaching of concepts. Try the question stems below.



Be a documenter. Record learning processes in order to deepen and extend learning.

Questions to Extend Play and Deepen Thinking:

- How did you create this?
- What part did you do first? What could you add?
- What else could you try?
- Tell us more about your (painting, structure, game...)
- What do you wonder?
- What do you notice about (that structure, object, etc.)?
- What do you think is going on?
- Why do you think that?
- What might happen if....?
- What is the problem? What ideas do you have to solve that problem?
- Can you teach me/us how to...?

After Play

Reflecting and Documenting: A teacher's work is not done once play ends; the teacher's work continues in several important ways.

After Play: Teacher's Next Steps

Reflecting on the Session:

- **Document Observations**: Note how children interacted with each other and with the materials.
- **Resource Effectiveness**: Identify which resources sparked interest and which did not.
- **Challenges and Conflicts**: Record any challenges or conflicts that arose during play.

Analyzing Learning Outcomes:

- **Evaluate Objectives**: Assess whether the play activities met the intended learning objectives.
- **Skill Development**: Consider what skills (social, cognitive, motor) were developed or need more support.

Communicating with Stakeholders:

- **Share Observations**: Provide key observations and progress reports to parents through brief reports or discussions.
- **Collaborate with Colleagues**: Discuss successful strategies and areas for improvement with fellow educators.

Planning for Future Activities:

- **Adjust Themes**: Modify or expand on themes that engaged the children, introducing new, related materials if needed.
- **Revise Classroom Setup**: Make changes based on observed challenges and successes.
- **Develop New Activities**: Create new activities that build on children's interests and address any identified gaps.

Self-Reflection and Professional Growth:

- **Reflect on Practices**: Evaluate personal teaching practices and intervention strategies used during play.
- **Professional Development**: Identify opportunities for professional growth to enhance play facilitation skills.

These detailed steps ensure that the teacher's role continues to support and enhance the learning experience even after play has ended.

Adjusting the Environment

Feedback from play is used to adjust the classroom setup and materials:

Adjusting the Environment: Key Considerations

Expand Themes:

- **Add Related Materials**: If a resource captures children's imagination, introduce new, related materials to build on that interest.

Increase Supplies:

- **Ease Sharing**: Duplicate materials or add extra supplies to ensure every child has access.

Reconfigure Layout:

- **Define Areas**: Create more defined spaces for group activities and individual work.
- **Promote Collaboration**: Adjust seating arrangements to enhance collaboration and reduce distractions.

Update Visuals:

- **Refresh Displays**: Update posters and displays to match current themes and projects.

Improve Storage:

- **Accessible Solutions**: Use flexible, accessible storage solutions so that materials are easy for children to reach.

Optimize Environment:

- **Comfortable Space**: Adjust lighting or reduce noise levels to create a comfortable, focused space for play.

These steps help ensure that the classroom environment evolves to meet each child's learning and developmental needs. The vignette below shows how Ms. Rivera is a reflective teacher after the children are done playing.

Vignette: Reflecting and Adjusting After the Community Play Centers

After the "Community Celebration" play session concludes, Ms. Rivera shifts into a reflective mode to ensure that every learning opportunity is captured and built upon. She gathers her observations, noting how children interacted with the diverse costumes, props, and play areas. Ms. Rivera documents which resources sparked curiosity and engagement, and she carefully records any challenges or conflicts that arose, such as difficulties sharing limited costumes or negotiating roles. This detailed reflection not only helps her evaluate whether the session met its objectives (like fostering problem-solving, collaboration, and community awareness) but also guides her in assessing the development of social, cognitive, and motor skills.

Following her observations, Ms. Rivera collaborates with colleagues and communicates with parents by sharing key insights from the session. She discusses what strategies worked well and identifies areas needing improvement. With this feedback, she plans for future activities by adjusting or expanding on themes that captured the children's interest—for instance, by introducing additional role-play materials or redesigning the "Community Corner" to allow for smoother group interactions. Additionally, Ms. Rivera makes thoughtful adjustments to the environment: expanding themes with new, related resources; increasing supplies to ease sharing; reconfiguring the layout for better collaboration; updating visual displays to reflect current projects; and optimizing lighting and noise levels to create a comfortable, focused space. This comprehensive process of reflection, communication, planning, and environmental adjustment ensures that every play session continuously evolves to meet each child's learning and developmental needs, thereby laying a robust foundation for lifelong learning.

Play and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

Before concluding, it is important to recognize that **effective play-based learning is rooted in intentional, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).** According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Position Statement, "The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in… intentionality, in the knowledge that practitioners consider when they are making decisions, and in their always aiming for goals that are both challenging and achievable for children." In order to achieve this, educators draw on three critical areas of knowledge:

- **Age-Appropriateness:** Using what is known about child development and learning in general.
- **Individual-Appropriateness:** Understanding each child as an individual and being responsive to their unique needs.
- **Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness:** Considering the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Frameworks like Head Start and WMELS emphasize that every child is unique, learns within relationships, and thrives when emotionally and physically secure. They build on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) principles. These concepts will be explained in future chapters.

Conclusion

In summary, play is far more than mere fun—it is an essential process through which children actively explore their world, experiment with ideas, and build vital skills. Teachers intentionally create play environments by selecting engaging, age-appropriate materials and designing spaces that encourage exploration, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. This intentional approach is at the heart of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), which emphasizes planning with clear goals based on what is known about child development, individual needs, and the social and cultural context of learning. As the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Position Statement explains, DAP is rooted in intentionality, with educators purposefully making decisions to provide experiences that are both challenging and achievable.

By carefully planning, actively facilitating, and continuously reflecting on play experiences, teachers ensure that each session not only nurtures children's natural curiosity but also builds a robust foundation for lifelong learning.

References

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2.3: SSAMM Play Fosters Development in All Domains

Introduction

Early childhood development is a multifaceted process that encompasses various domains, each contributing to the holistic growth of a child. In this document, we explore how SSAMM (Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement) activities can foster development across all domains—cognitive, social, emotional, physical, creative, and language. By integrating these activities into classroom settings, educators can create dynamic and engaging learning experiences that support the interconnected nature of child development.

This document is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the developmental domains, their interconnections, and practical examples of SSAMM activities that promote growth in each area. We begin by examining the fundamental domains of child development and their interrelatedness, followed by an exploration of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) and how they align with these domains. Finally, we present a variety of classroom activities that illustrate how SSAMM can be effectively implemented to enhance children's learning and development.

Bridging the Domains: Connecting the Early Learning Standards with Developmental Domains

Earlier in this chapter, we explored six domains of learning fundamental to child development. These domains—cognitive, social, emotional, physical, creative, and language—are all interconnected and influence one another. The image below illustrates the interrelatedness of developmental domains by visually representing them as interconnected circles surrounding a central figure of a child, emphasizing how they collectively contribute to a child's overall development. Each domain—**Cognitive, Language, Physical, Creative, Social, and Emotional**—is depicted with relevant icons, showing their distinct yet interdependent roles.



Figure 2.3.1: "Developmental Domains" by Heather Carter is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Accessible version.

To better understand how these domains influence one another, consider the following examples of their interconnection:

- **Cognitive & Language**: Language development supports cognitive growth by enabling children to express thoughts, understand concepts, and solve problems.
- **Cognitive & Social**: Social interactions help children develop reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.
- **Emotional & Social**: Emotional development influences how children interact with others, build relationships, and manage conflicts.
- **Physical & Cognitive**: Physical activities promote brain development, coordination, and motor skills, essential for tasks like

writing and exploration.
- **Creative & Emotional**: Creative expression, such as art or music, helps children process emotions and develop self-identity.
- **Language & Social**: Communication skills are crucial for building friendships, collaborating, and expressing needs.

Understanding the Domains through the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)

As we've seen, the six developmental domains—cognitive, social, emotional, physical, creative, and language—are deeply interconnected and play a vital role in the holistic development of young children. Each domain influences and supports the others, as demonstrated by their interconnections.

Building on this understanding, the **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)** provide a framework for early childhood development by organizing these interconnected domains into five key areas of learning and development. These domains, while named slightly differently, represent the same core areas of growth we discussed earlier. Below, we explore each of these domains in more detail, highlighting how they contribute to a child's development in practical and meaningful ways.

1. **Physical Development** (🔵 WMELS Domain I – Health & Physical Development): This domain includes the development of gross motor skills (like running, jumping, balancing) and fine motor skills (like drawing, cutting, and manipulating small objects). It also includes learning healthy habits such as hygiene, nutrition, and physical care of the body.
2. **Social Development and Emotional Development** (🔴 WMELS Domain II – Social & Emotional Development): This area focuses on how children understand and express emotions, build friendships, show empathy, and manage behavior. It also includes self-awareness, self-regulation, and the ability to form secure relationships with others.
3. **Language Development** (🟢 WMELS Domain III – Language Development & Communication): Language development includes listening, understanding, and using spoken language to express ideas. It also covers early literacy skills such as storytelling, recognizing print, and engaging in conversations.
4. **Creative Development** (🟣 WMELS Domain IV – Approaches to Learning (Creative Development)): This domain supports imagination, invention, and expression through open-ended experiences in art, music, movement, and dramatic play. It also includes curiosity, risk-taking, and persistence in exploring and problem-solving.
5. **Cognitive Development** (🟡 WMELS Domain V – Cognition & General Knowledge): This includes thinking and reasoning skills, memory, early math and science understanding, and the ability to solve problems. It also covers understanding the world around them, including concepts from social studies, science, and basic logic.

Bringing the Domains to Life in Classroom Activities

Now that we have explored the five domains of early childhood development as outlined in the **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)**, it is important to recognize how these domains are not isolated but rather **interconnected** in real classroom settings. In the early childhood classroom, the integration of these domains is essential for promoting a holistic learning experience that nurtures the **physical**, **social**, **emotional**, **language**, and **cognitive** development of young children.

This interconnectedness becomes especially clear when we consider how the domains are woven together in **social studies, art, music, and movement (SSAMM)** activities. In these activities, children have opportunities to engage in **meaningful learning experiences** that support and enhance all five domains simultaneously. Let's explore how SSAMM activities can promote the development of each domain in an interactive, dynamic classroom environment:

Social Studies

Through explorations of community, history, and culture, children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (cognitive development), express emotions and interact with peers (social and emotional development), and learn language and communication skills through discussions and storytelling (language development).

> 🌍 **Social Studies/Dramatic Play Example:**

When children set up and play in a pretend post office (🟣 approaches to learning), they also write and read letters (🟢 language), plan delivery routes, and sort mail (🟡 cognition), take turns as clerks and carriers (🔴 social & emotional), and practice stamping, folding, and handling envelopes (🔵 physical).

Art

Creative expression in art activities encourages children to use fine motor skills (physical development), express emotions and thoughts through visual media (emotional development), and build cognitive skills such as planning and problem-solving (cognitive development). Art also fosters social interactions as children share ideas and collaborate on projects (social development).

🎨 **Art Example:**

When children paint their favorite animal from a trip to the zoo (🟣 approaches to learning), they also build fine motor skills (🔵 physical), talk about their art (🟢 language), share materials (🔴 social & emotional), and express emotions and feel proud about their art work (🔴 social & emotional).

Music & Movement

Music experiences promote physical development through rhythm and movement, cognitive development by exploring patterns and sequences, language development by using songs and lyrics to enhance vocabulary, and emotional development through the expression of feelings and emotions.

Physical activities, such as dance and coordinated games, enhance gross motor skills (physical development), support cognitive development by teaching patterns and sequences, and promote social skills as children work together to follow instructions and cooperate with peers (social development).

🎵 **Music & Movement Example:**

When children sing “If You’re Happy and You Know It” while clapping and stomping (🟣 approaches to learning), they also develop coordination and motor control (🔵 physical), learn new words and follow directions (🟢 language), cooperate, take turns, and share joy with others (🔴 social & emotional), and remember the sequence of lyrics and actions (🟡 cognition).

By integrating these activities in the classroom, we create a rich environment where the domains are not just theoretical concepts but active, living components of children’s daily learning experiences. This integration also aligns with the idea that children’s growth in one domain often supports and enhances development in others, reinforcing the interconnected nature of learning.

Learning in All Domains Through SSAMM Experiences

Read the examples below to discover how children learn across multiple domains through SSAMM (Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement) experiences, all centered around the theme of community helpers. These examples highlight how engaging in activities related to social studies, art, music, and movement supports children's development while exploring the important roles of community helpers. By participating in SSAMM experiences, children are able to integrate knowledge about their community, express creativity, engage in physical activity, and experience the world of work through hands-on, interactive learning.

Social Studies: Learning Through Community Play

Community Helper Play

Children might pretend to work in a post office, grocery store, doctor's office, or classroom using dress-up clothes, props, and

role-play scenarios. They organize roles, take turns, and solve pretend problems while using vocabulary related to real-world jobs.

- 🟡 WMELS Domain V – Cognition & General Knowledge: Builds cognitive skills as children plan their roles, solve pretend problems, and organize activities (e.g., checking out groceries or delivering mail)
- 🟢 WMELS Domain III – Language Development & Communication: Builds language skills through conversations, asking and answering questions, and using job-related vocabulary
- 🔴 WMELS Domain II – Social & Emotional Development: Promotes empathy and social understanding as children take on roles that help others and practice teamwork, kindness, and cooperation

> **Activity Idea:**
>
> Set up a pretend post office in the classroom. Provide envelopes, paper, stamps, mailboxes, and uniforms or bags for delivery. Children write letters (🟢 language), sort and deliver mail (🟡 cognition), and take on postal roles like clerk or carrier (🔴 social & emotional development). This dramatic play scenario supports planning, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration while helping children understand how community systems work.

Cultural Celebrations

Children engage in activities that honor a wide range of cultural traditions and backgrounds. This may include making traditional crafts, preparing cultural foods, listening to music from different countries, or celebrating special holidays with stories and songs.

- 🔴 WMELS Domain II – Social & Emotional Development: Supports identity and inclusion by celebrating diversity and recognizing different family and community practices
- 🟢 WMELS Domain III – Language Development & Communication: Enhances language development through new vocabulary, stories, songs, and discussions about traditions
- 🟣 WMELS Domain IV – Approaches to Learning: Encourages creativity and engagement through culturally rich art, music, and storytelling

> **Activity Idea:**
>
> Create a classroom cultural celebration day. Invite children to share a family tradition, favorite food, or song from their culture. Provide materials for children to make flags, traditional crafts, or storybooks representing different countries. Include music from around the world and read aloud a culturally relevant story. Children use new vocabulary (🟢 language), express themselves creatively (🟣 approaches to learning), and build appreciation for others (🔴 social & emotional development).

Map-Making or Role Play

Children may use blocks, paper, or digital tools to create simple maps of their classroom, neighborhood, or a make-believe town. They act out navigating or giving directions using the map, often incorporating elements of pretend play.

- 🔵 WMELS Domain I – **Health & Physical Development**: Enhances spatial awareness and coordination through hands-on building and navigating
- 🔴 WMELS Domain II **– Social & Emotional Development**: Supports social learning and cooperative play
- 🟣 WMELS Domain IV – **Approaches to Learning**: Encourages imagination and sustained engagement with abstract thinking
- 🟡 WMELS Domain V – **Cognition & General Knowledge**: Teaches direction, planning, and spatial thinking through map use and real-world applications

> **Activity Idea:**

Invite children to create a map of their classroom, playground, or a made-up community using paper, blocks, or digital tools. Provide markers, stickers, and building materials for landmarks like roads, houses, parks, or stores. Once their maps are complete, children can act out giving directions or "traveling" through the space using toy figures or themselves. Children use spatial reasoning (🟡 cognition), move and build with materials (🔵 health & physical development), collaborate with peers (🔴 social & emotional development), and engage their creativity and imagination (🟣 approaches to learning).

Art

Children explore materials like paint, markers, clay, and collage pieces to create original artwork. They express thoughts and feelings through color, shape, and texture, often inspired by stories, emotions, or seasonal themes. Art can also help children learn social studies concepts by exploring cultural symbols, creating crafts related to traditions or holidays, and representing their community, family, or environment through drawings and mixed media.

- 🔵 WMELS Domain I – Health & Physical Development: Strengthens fine motor control using tools like scissors, paintbrushes, and glue sticks
- 🔴 WMELS Domain II – Social & Emotional Development: Expresses feelings and builds confidence through personal expression
- 🟢 WMELS Domain III – Language Development & Communication: Builds vocabulary and storytelling skills by discussing their creations
- 🟣 WMELS Domain IV – Approaches to Learning: Encourages creativity, initiative, and open-ended exploration through self-directed art experiences
- 🟡 WMELS Domain V – Cognition & General Knowledge: Supports early math and science thinking through observation, patterning, and experimentation

Activity Idea:

Set up an open-ended art station where children can create self-portraits, family drawings, or neighborhood scenes using crayons, markers, clay, paper, and collage materials. Encourage them to include cultural symbols or elements from their own lives. As they work, invite them to describe what they're making and why. Children develop fine motor skills (🔵 health & physical development), express feelings and identity (🔴 social & emotional development), build vocabulary through conversation (🟢 language), think critically about composition and symbols (🟡 cognition), and explore freely with creativity and persistence (🟣 approaches to learning).

Dramatic Play

Children take on roles from real life or fantasy using props, costumes, and imagination. They may act out going to the doctor, caring for a baby, or running a restaurant. These experiences promote social understanding and creative expression. Dramatic play also supports social studies learning by helping children explore community roles, rules, responsibilities, and everyday routines—giving them a hands-on way to understand how society works. Dramatic play may also support physical development as children move their bodies, use tools and props, and practice everyday health routines like feeding a baby, cooking, caregiving, or cleaning.

- 🔵 WMELS Domain I – **Health & Physical Development**: Builds fine and gross motor skills through the use of props and active role-play; encourages the practice of health and self-care routines
- 🔴 WMELS Domain II – **Social & Emotional Development**: Develops empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation
- 🟢 WMELS Domain III – **Language Development & Communication**: Enhances conversation skills, role-based vocabulary, and expressive language
- 🟣 WMELS Domain IV – **Approaches to Learning**: Encourages creativity, problem-solving, and initiative
- 🟡 WMELS Domain V – **Cognition & General Knowledge**: Explores roles, routines, and problem-solving in real-world scenarios

Activity Idea:

Set up a dramatic play area themed as a restaurant, doctor's office, or grocery store. Provide props such as menus, order pads, medical kits, pretend food, uniforms, and money. Encourage children to take turns in different roles—like chef, customer, cashier, or doctor—and act out real-world scenarios. They move their bodies and use tools (🔵 health & physical development), engage in teamwork and empathy (🔴 social & emotional development), communicate using role-specific language (🟢 language), think creatively and solve problems (🟣 approaches to learning), and explore routines and systems from everyday life (🟡 cognition & general knowledge).

Music and Movement

Children participate in group songs, dance routines, rhythm games, and movement stories. They may use instruments, scarves, or their own bodies to follow rhythms, explore beats, and express themselves through motion and sound. Music can also support social studies learning by introducing children to songs, dances, instruments, and rhythms from different cultures and traditions, helping them develop an appreciation for diversity and community values.

Children participate in group songs, dance routines, rhythm games, and movement stories. They may use instruments, scarves, or their own bodies to follow rhythms, explore beats, and express themselves through motion and sound. Music and movement support social studies learning by exposing children to dances, instruments, songs, rhythms, and movement styles from various cultures and communities. Through these experiences, children gain a deeper appreciation of traditions, cultural expression, and group identity.

- 🔵 WMELS Domain I – **Health & Physical Development**: Develops balance, coordination, and large muscle control through physical activity
- 🔴 WMELS Domain II – **Social & Emotional Development**: Encourages turn-taking, emotion regulation, and group participation
- 🟢 WMELS Domain III – **Language Development & Communication**: Builds language through lyrics, rhymes, and call-and-response singing
- 🟣 WMELS Domain IV – **Approaches to Learning**: Inspires exploration, risk-taking, and self-expression through sound and movement
- 🟡 WMELS Domain V – **Cognition & General Knowledge**: Strengthens memory, sequencing, and rhythm through repetitive musical patterns

Activity Idea:

Create a “World Music and Dance” experience. Introduce children to songs and dances from a variety of cultures, such as an African drum circle, a Latin salsa beat, or a traditional folk dance. Provide instruments like tambourines, maracas, or homemade drums, and encourage children to move to the rhythms using scarves or body motions. Invite discussion about where the music comes from and what it might celebrate. Children build coordination and motor control (🔵 health & physical development), practice cooperation and cultural respect (🔴 social & emotional development), develop listening and vocabulary skills (🟢 language), express themselves creatively (🟣 approaches to learning), and engage memory, sequencing, and cultural understanding (🟡 cognition & general knowledge).

The chart below summarizes how children develop in each domain through social studies, art, music, and movement experiences.

SSAMM Development in the Developmental Domains

WMELS Domain #	Domain Name	Development Through SSAMM Activities
🔵 WMELS Domain I	Health and Physical Development	Develops gross motor coordination through movement and dance

WMELS Domain #	Domain Name	Development Through SSAMM Activities
🔴 WMELS Domain II	Social and Emotional Development	Helps children express emotions and practice social interaction through group participation
🟢 WMELS Domain III	Language Development and Communication	Expands vocabulary and builds phonological awareness through rhymes and lyrics
🟣 WMELS Domain IV	Approaches to Learning	Supports creativity and exploration of materials. Encourages exploration through sound and motion.
🟡 WMELS Domain V	Cognition and General Knowledge	Enhances memory, rhythm, and sequencing through repetitive patterns and songs

Conclusion

In summary, SSAMM (Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement) activities offer an effective way to foster holistic development in young children by integrating the five core domains of early childhood development: physical, social-emotional, language, cognitive, and creative. By utilizing these activities, children engage in experiences that simultaneously enhance multiple areas of growth. Whether through dramatic play, community helper roles, cultural celebrations, or music and movement, each activity promotes key developmental skills such as fine and gross motor coordination, language and communication, creativity, problem-solving, and social cooperation. By embedding these integrated experiences in the classroom, educators create a rich learning environment that supports the interconnected nature of child development, ensuring children develop not only in isolation but across all domains in meaningful and dynamic ways.

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2.4: SSAMM Curriculum Planning and Assessment Using Observational Skill

Introduction to Curriculum Planning Cycle and Observational Skills in SSAMM

Effective curriculum planning in Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) is grounded in a reflective and observational approach that helps teachers understand children's interests, developmental stages, and individual needs. The curriculum planning cycle consists of four key steps: observation, documentation, interpretation, and reflection. By integrating strong observational skills into this cycle, teachers can create a more tailored and engaging learning experience for children.

Step 1: Observation – Looking and Listening



Observation is the first step in the curriculum planning cycle. Through this process, teachers gather vital information about how children engage with their environment, peers, and materials. In **SSAMM** activities, observations help teachers understand how children interact with concepts like community roles in social studies, creativity in art, rhythm in music, and coordination in movement.

For example, in **Social Studies**, teachers can observe how children play roles in dramatic play or community helper scenarios. They might ask questions such as, *"How do the children use the materials in their block play to build a town?"* or *"Are the children cooperating with one another during the activity?"* These observations provide insight into children's understanding of social roles, community dynamics, and problem-solving skills.

In **Art**, teachers can observe the creative choices children make, such as the materials they choose, how they express themselves through color and shape, and the process they follow to create. By paying close attention to these choices, teachers can identify patterns in the children's artistic development and recognize areas where further support or challenge may be needed.

In **Music**, observation helps teachers understand children's responsiveness to different sounds, rhythms, and instruments. Teachers may ask, *"How does the child interact with the music?"* or *"Is the child able to keep a rhythm or move to the beat?"* This insight allows teachers to adapt the music curriculum to support the development of coordination and a deeper understanding of musical concepts.

In **Movement**, observing how children engage in physical activities, like dance or cooperative games, reveals their gross motor

skills, coordination, and ability to follow instructions. By watching their interactions and responses, teachers can better plan activities that promote physical development and social cooperation.

Step 2: Documentation – Recording Evidence and Gathering Artifacts

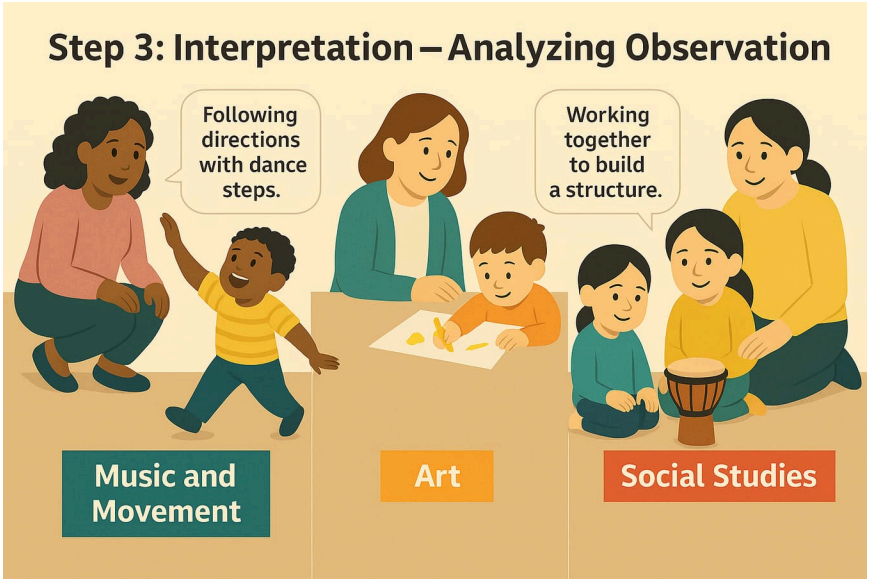


Once observations are made, documenting the details of what was seen and heard is essential. Teachers record observations through various techniques like anecdotal notes, frequency counts, or checklists. In **SSAMM**, documentation provides evidence of how children are progressing in key areas, such as social interactions, creative expression, and physical coordination.

For instance, in **Art**, a teacher might document a child's use of specific tools, such as how they manipulate a paintbrush or the marks they make on the canvas. In **Music**, a teacher might record how a child responds to a specific song or how they experiment with different instruments. By documenting these behaviors and actions, teachers can track progress over time and identify new interests or challenges that arise.

In **Social Studies**, teachers might use documentation to track children's engagement with topics like community, culture, and history. For example, observing and recording how children role-play a community scene or engage in discussions about family traditions can help teachers identify areas for further exploration and understanding.

Step 3: Interpretation – Analyzing Observation Data



After collecting documentation, teachers analyze the data to interpret what it means in terms of a child's development. In **SSAMM**, interpretation involves considering how each child's actions, behaviors, and interactions reflect their current developmental stage and how these can inform the next steps in learning.

For example, in **Movement**, a teacher might interpret how a child's ability to follow dance steps or participate in a group activity shows progress in physical development. Similarly, in **Art**, the teacher might analyze a child's choice of materials or technique to assess their creative expression and problem-solving skills.

In **Social Studies**, interpreting documentation allows teachers to understand a child's ability to cooperate with others, their understanding of community roles, and how they make connections to their own lives. In **Music**, teachers analyze how children interact with rhythm, melody, and sound, which can guide future music activities and interventions.

Step 4: Reflection – Planning for the Next Step



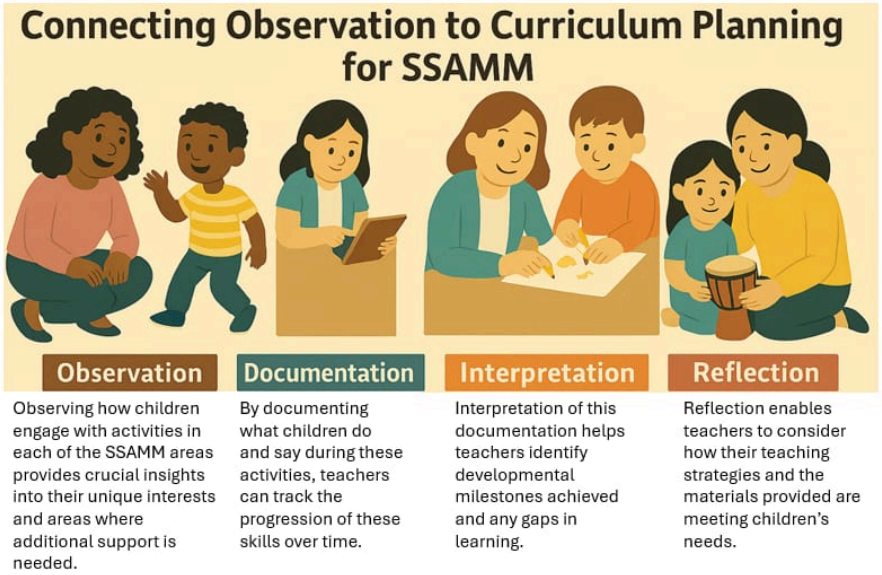
Reflection is the final step in the curriculum planning cycle. It involves thinking critically about what the observations and documentation reveal about each child's learning and development. Reflecting on this information allows teachers to plan

activities that are developmentally appropriate, engaging, and challenging for each child in **SSAMM**.

For example, in **Social Studies**, after observing children's play in the block area or during dramatic play, a teacher might reflect on how to expand that activity. They may decide to introduce new materials or roles that deepen children's understanding of the community. In **Art**, reflection may lead teachers to introduce new art techniques or projects that challenge children to expand their creative expression. In **Music**, reflection might prompt teachers to introduce more complex rhythms or instruments to help children develop their musical skills further.

In **Movement**, teachers may reflect on children's physical activities and identify ways to incorporate new movements or physical challenges that support the development of coordination and gross motor skills. Reflection ensures that the curriculum remains dynamic, evolving based on the needs and interests of the children.

Connecting Observation to Curriculum Planning for SSAMM



Through **careful observation**, **documentation**, **interpretation**, and **reflection**, teachers can design a curriculum that deeply supports the development of children in **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM)**. Observing how children engage with activities in each of these areas provides crucial insights into their unique interests, learning styles, strengths, and areas where they may require additional support. For instance, in **Social Studies**, observations might reveal a child's developing understanding of community roles or their engagement in cooperative play, which can guide the selection of more complex social scenarios or collaborative activities. In **Art**, teachers may observe a child's exploration with different mediums or a particular focus on color or texture, guiding them to introduce new materials or techniques that challenge the child's creativity. Similarly, in **Music**, a teacher might notice a child's ability to understand rhythm or their reaction to different instruments, prompting the introduction of more challenging musical concepts. In **Movement**, observing children's interactions during physical activities can show their developmental stage in coordination and motor skills, allowing teachers to tailor activities that promote their physical growth.

By documenting what children do and say during these activities, teachers can track the progression of these skills over time, gaining a clearer picture of where a child excels and where they need further support. Interpretation of this documentation helps teachers identify developmental milestones achieved and any gaps in learning, while **reflection** enables teachers to thoughtfully consider how their teaching strategies and the materials provided are meeting children's needs. Reflective practice also encourages teachers to continually assess whether the curriculum is culturally responsive, engaging, and inclusive of all students' backgrounds, fostering an environment where every child feels seen and valued.

Ultimately, observational skills form the bedrock of an effective and responsive curriculum. These skills allow teachers to understand not only how children interact with the world but also how they learn and process information in real time. When observational data is used effectively, it enables teachers to design and implement a curriculum that is both **developmentally appropriate** and **individually responsive**, ensuring that it meets the evolving needs of each child. By focusing on the **SSAMM** areas, teachers create a dynamic and enriching learning environment that fosters holistic development, engagement, and

meaningful progress for all students, regardless of their learning styles or developmental pace.

Conclusion

Observational skills are the foundation for assessing children's progress and planning effective curricula. In **SSAMM**, these skills help teachers understand how children learn and interact with their environment, ensuring that the curriculum is engaging, inclusive, and tailored to the developmental needs of all students.

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5.6: A Closer Look at the Curriculum Planning Cycle(opens in new window). Gina Peterson and Emily Elam(opens in new window). *A closer look at the curriculum planning cycle: Connecting observation to curriculum planning for SSAMM*. CC BY 4.0(opens in new window)

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2.5: SSAMM Play Across All Ages

Introduction

While a previous section explored how creative, hands-on activities in Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) support holistic child development across the WMELS domains, it's also important to understand how these experiences look at different stages of early childhood. From infancy through preschool, children engage with their world in ways that evolve as they grow. Below, you will learn about the type of play each age group engages in, the key skills each develops, and the appropriate materials based on age and developmental level.

Understanding Play Across Age Groups

Children's play evolves significantly from infancy through preschool. Each stage of early childhood is characterized by distinct types of play, developmental milestones, and suitable materials that support growth. Let's begin by examining the play characteristics and developmental needs of infants.

SSAMM Experiences and Developmental Stages in Early Childhood

Stage	Age	Type of Play	Key Skills	Materials
Infancy	Birth to 18	Exploratory	Sensory awareness	Soft books, textured objects
Toddler-hood	18 mo-ths	Parallel	Language, motor development	Building blocks, art supplies
Preschool	3–5 years	Cooperative	Social interaction, creativity	Costumes, musical instruments

Infants (Birth to 12 months)

Play Type: Unoccupied Play

Infants engage in sensory and motor activities, exploring their environment randomly. They may shake rattles, kick their feet, or observe how objects interact with their surroundings (e.g., rolling balls, grabbing toys). At this stage, their play is typically solitary and centered around their immediate sensory experiences.

Key Skills:

- Sensory exploration (touch, sight, hearing)
- Cause-and-effect understanding
- Early motor control (grasping, reaching, kicking)

Appropriate Materials:

- **Social and Fantasy**: Mirrors, soft-bodied dolls, washable stuffed toys, hand puppets
- **Exploration and Mastery**: Sensory toys (rattles, squeeze toys), stacking cups, soft foam or rubber blocks
- **Music, Art, and Movement**: Noisemakers (bells, music boxes), rhythmic toys, and simple musical instruments
- **Gross Motor**: Soft, padded surfaces for tummy time, texture boxes, and push-and-pull toys.

Toddlers (1 to 3 years)

Play Type: Solitary Play, Parallel Play

Toddlers often play alone or side by side with other children. They engage in simple pretend play, such as pretending to feed a doll or imitating adults in their environment. As they grow, toddlers begin to imitate and engage in parallel play, often mimicking the actions of others nearby.

Key Skills:

- Early problem-solving (e.g., stacking blocks, fitting shapes)
- Social interaction (playing alongside peers)
- Fine and gross motor development (stacking, building, climbing, running)
- Beginning symbolic thought (pretending to be a family member or using objects symbolically)

Appropriate Materials:

- **Social and Fantasy**: Simple dolls with accessories, dress-up clothes, pretend kitchen sets
- **Exploration and Mastery**: Puzzles (4-12 pieces), shape sorters, stacking toys, soft building blocks
- **Music, Art, and Movement**: Large crayons, markers, finger paints, musical instruments like maracas or tambourines
- **Gross Motor**: Push toys, ride-on toys, low climbing structures, large balls for kicking or throwing

Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)

Play Type: Associative Play, Cooperative Play

Preschoolers engage in more complex play with others, sharing materials and collaborating on activities like building structures, pretending to be animals or family members, and organizing group games. They begin to understand roles and rules in cooperative play, with more negotiation and problem-solving involved.

Key Skills:

- Advanced social-emotional skills (negotiation, empathy, conflict resolution)
- Cognitive skills (sorting, counting, using symbols for representation)
- Enhanced language development (storytelling, pretending, role-playing)
- Problem-solving in both social and physical contexts (e.g., resolving disagreements in games)
- Appropriate Materials:
- Social and Fantasy: Dolls with clothing, role-playing props (e.g., play food, kitchen sets, dress-up clothes), small animal figures
- Exploration and Mastery: Building blocks (e.g., Lego® bricks, Duplo® blocks), puzzles (up to 30 pieces), counting bears, sorting materials (by size, color, shape)
- Music, Art, and Movement: Art supplies (e.g., crayons, scissors, playdough, watercolor paints), rhythm instruments (e.g., tambourines, maracas), large paper for drawing and painting
- Gross Motor: Balls, tricycles, scooters, small climbing structures, jump ropes, flying disks like Frisbees™.

In early childhood, play across four curricular areas—Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement—supports holistic child development. Through hands-on exploration, children learn about their world, fostering cognitive, emotional, physical, and social

growth. Below, you will see specific examples of the types of play children in each age group engage with in each curricular area.

Social Studies Play

- **Preschoolers**: Engage in dramatic play (role-playing various occupations), community play (building structures with blocks), and interactive storytelling. Activities like exploring maps, discussing family traditions, and field trips help children understand their roles within the community.
- **Toddlers**: Play focuses on family roles and relationships, such as caring for dolls or mimicking adult roles. Simple storytelling and sensory exploration of objects help them learn about their community.
- **Infants**: Begin understanding social bonds through caregiver interactions. Simple sensory exploration, such as recognizing voices or engaging in "serve-and-return" play, builds early social awareness.

Art Play

- **Preschoolers**: Focus on creative expression through drawing, painting, sculpting, and building. Activities emphasize the process of art creation, like experimenting with color mixing, textures, and using natural materials for outdoor art.
- **Toddlers**: Engage with basic tools for drawing and painting, explore textures through sensory art, and create simple collages. These activities foster motor skill development and early creativity.
- **Infants**: Art play is centered on sensory experiences like finger painting with non-toxic materials and exploring textures, supporting sensory integration and early fine motor skills.

Music Play

- **Preschoolers**: Participate in action songs, rhythmic activities, and play instruments like tambourines or drums. Movement and music integration, such as dancing and listening to different musical styles, enhances rhythm, social interaction, and emotional expression.
- **Toddlers**: Explore instruments, sing along with repetitive songs, and dance. Simple rhythmic activities like clapping or tapping to beats help develop auditory skills and coordination.
- **Infants**: Respond to music through cooing, moving to rhythm, and engaging with simple instruments. Music supports early language development, emotional regulation, and bonding with caregivers.

Movement Play

- **Preschoolers**: Engage in activities like running, jumping, climbing, and creative movement through dance and obstacle courses. These activities promote physical fitness, coordination, and social skills.
- **Toddlers**: Focus on walking, running, climbing, and jumping. Playing with balls and obstacle courses helps develop balance, coordination, and spatial awareness.
- **Infants**: Develop early movement skills through tummy time, reaching, rolling, and kicking. These activities strengthen muscles, improve coordination, and enhance sensory processing.

Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement Activities

The tables below outline how **Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement** activities promote development across age groups—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. It highlights how children play differently at various ages, with each group engaging in **SSAMM** in unique ways. Even in simple activities like clapping to a rhythm or exploring collage materials, each age group benefits from growth in cognitive skills, language, physical movement, emotional development, creativity, and social understanding. By recognizing these differences in how children play, educators can better support their development through age-appropriate experiences.

🌍Social Studies🌍Focus: Exploring people, families, communities, and the environment

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Activities • Looking at family photo books • Using mirrors • Exploring caregiver routines	Activities • Role play (pretend cooking, baby dolls) • Simple sorting (family vs. community helpers)	Activities • Dramatic play • Community helper dress-up • Simple Maps
Developmental Benefits ✔️ Sense of self and others ✔️ Attachment and security ✔️ Awareness of routines and environment	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Identity and belonging ✔️ Social interaction ✔️ Understanding of roles in their world	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Empathy and perspective-taking ✔️ Vocabulary and storytelling ✔️ Civic awareness (rules, community)

🎨Art🎨Focus: Creativity, expression, and exploration of materials

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Activities • Safe finger painting • Exploring textures • Scribbling with chunky crayons	Activities • Collages • Stamping • Color mixing with brushes or sponges	Activities • Drawing • Cutting • Pasting • Sculpture with clay
Developmental Benefits ✔️ Sensory exploration ✔️ Fine motor development ✔️ Self-expression	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Hand-eye coordination ✔️ Decision-making and independence ✔️ Emotional expression	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Creativity and imagination ✔️ Focus and persistence ✔️ Language skills through describing art)

🎵Music 🎵Focus: Rhythm, sound, listening, and self-expression

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Activities • Singing lullabies • Clapping to rhythm • Musical mobiles	Activities • Playing instruments (shakers, drums) • Echo songs • Dancing to music	Activities • Group singing • Rhythm games • Making simple instruments
Developmental Benefits ✔️ Auditory discrimination ✔️ Bonding and language rhythm ✔️ Calm and regulation	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Rhythm and timing ✔️ Imitation and memory ✔️ Motor coordination	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Language and phonological awareness ✔️ Social participation ✔️ Emotional expression

🏃Movement 🏃Focus: Gross motor skills, body awareness, coordination, and expression

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Activities • Tummy time with toys • Reaching and stretching • Caregiver-led movement songs	Activities • Dancing • Obstacle courses • Movement games (e.g., follow the leader)	Activities • Creative movement to music • Yoga for kids Hopscotch • Relays
Developmental Benefits ✔️ Muscle strength and control ✔️ Spatial awareness ✔️ Sensory integration	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Balance and coordination ✔️ Self-regulation through movement ✔️ Confidence and autonomy	Developmental Benefits ✔️ Physical fitness and endurance ✔️ Social cooperation and turn-taking ✔️ Body awareness and creativity

Conclusion

In summary, children's engagement with Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement evolves with each stage of early childhood, reflecting their growing abilities and interests. Infants focus on sensory exploration, forming attachments, and discovering basic cause-and-effect. As toddlers gain independence, they begin to scribble, sing short songs, imitate adult roles, and refine gross motor skills. By preschool, children deepen these skills through more cooperative, imaginative, and purposeful play, resulting in richer social understanding, artistic expression, musical exploration, and physical coordination. Recognizing these developmental variations allows caregivers and educators to tailor experiences that foster holistic growth at every stage.

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2.6: Social Studies Play in Early Childhood

Introduction

Social Studies Play in Early Childhood

Understanding social studies concepts is crucial for young children as it helps them make sense of their community, relationships, and the world around them. In early childhood, play is a fundamental way through which children explore and internalize these concepts. This text delves into how infants, toddlers, and preschoolers engage with social studies through various forms of play, highlighting the developmental appropriateness and educational value of these activities.

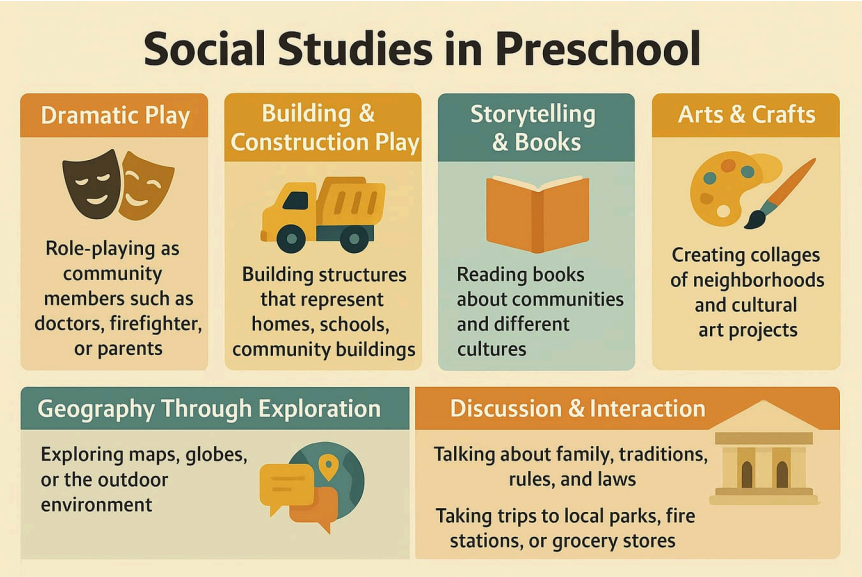
Preschoolers engage in dramatic play, building and construction play, storytelling, arts and crafts, and geography exploration. These activities help them understand social roles, community infrastructure, cultural diversity, and geographical concepts. For instance, role-playing as community helpers like doctors or firefighters fosters an understanding of societal roles and contributions.

Toddlers explore social studies through pretend play, sensory exploration, simple storytelling, and social interactions. Their play often focuses on immediate surroundings and familiar roles, such as family dynamics and community helpers. Activities like playing with toy versions of community objects or engaging in group activities help toddlers grasp basic social structures and cooperation.

Infants begin to develop an awareness of social studies concepts through sensory exploration and interactions with caregivers. Their early play experiences, such as exploring their environment and engaging in responsive play, lay the foundation for understanding relationships, social roles, and community structures.

This text provides a comprehensive overview of how play-based activities in early childhood education can effectively introduce and reinforce social studies concepts, fostering a deeper understanding of the world in young children. The following sections will explore in detail how children of different ages engage with social studies through play, offering insights and practical examples for educators and caregivers.

Preschoolers



Children in preschool can explore social studies concepts through play, which helps them understand their community, relationships, and the world around them. Social studies concepts for young children include an understanding of people, places,

time, and their role in the community. Here are some ways preschoolers engage with social studies through play:

Dramatic Play

- **Role-Playing**: Preschoolers engage in dramatic play, taking on roles such as doctors, firefighters, teachers, or parents. This type of play helps children understand various social roles and occupations, fostering an understanding of how individuals contribute to society.
- **Community Play**: Setting up pretend environments like a grocery store, post office, or restaurant allows children to role-play as members of a community. They practice real-world scenarios and begin to understand concepts such as helping others, working together, and social interactions.

Building and Construction Play

- **Building Communities**: Using blocks or other construction materials, preschoolers can build structures that represent homes, schools, or other community buildings. This play helps them understand the physical aspects of their community and the importance of infrastructure.
- **Understanding the Environment**: Building maps or creating representations of their neighborhoods or cities with blocks also introduces concepts of geography, space, and the interconnectedness of people and places.

Storytelling and Books

- **Reading Books About Communities and Cultures**: Teachers can read books that introduce children to different cultures, traditions, and community life. Through storytelling, children are exposed to ideas of diversity, empathy, and the values of social interaction.
- **Interactive Stories**: Using props like puppets, flannel boards, or toys, preschoolers can engage in storytelling that highlights social studies themes such as family, friendship, or the roles people play in society.

Arts and Crafts

- **Creating Community Collages**: Children can cut out pictures from magazines or use drawing materials to create art representing their community, the environment, or different cultural traditions. This helps them visualize their role within the broader community.
- **Cultural Art Projects**: Preschoolers can explore art from different cultures by making crafts based on various traditions (e.g., making paper lanterns for a Chinese New Year project). This helps children understand cultural diversity and global connections.

Geography Through Exploration

- **Exploring Maps**: Simple activities like looking at maps or globes help young children begin to understand geography. Teachers can create play-based scenarios where children explore different places, helping them understand concepts of location, landmarks, and regions.
- **Exploring the Environment**: Outdoor walks or field trips help preschoolers learn about their local environment. Teachers can discuss local landmarks, weather, or animal habitats, which tie into social studies concepts of place and community.

Discussion and Interaction

- **Talking About Family and Traditions**: Discussions about families, holidays, or community events allow children to connect their personal experiences with broader social studies concepts. Teachers can ask open-ended questions about the roles of family members, the importance of traditions, or what it means to be part of a community.
- **Learning About Rules and Laws**: Simple conversations about rules in the classroom or family rules introduce preschoolers to concepts of fairness, justice, and cooperation. These discussions help them understand the importance of social structures and the role of authority in society.

Field Trips or Virtual Tours

- **Visits to Local Places**: Field trips to local parks, fire stations, or grocery stores can provide firsthand experiences of community life. These trips help children connect with the social studies concepts they encounter in books and play.
- **Virtual Tours**: If in-person trips are not possible, virtual field trips or exploring local landmarks through photos can give children a broader understanding of their community or world.

Toddlers



Toddlers explore social studies concepts through their interactions with the world around them, particularly through play that emphasizes relationships, roles, and environments. While toddlers are still developing their understanding of abstract social studies concepts, their play often focuses on familiar, immediate surroundings, including family, community, and the people and places they encounter. Here are some ways toddlers engage with social studies concepts through play:

Pretend Play

- **Role-Playing**: Toddlers engage in simple pretend play where they mimic adult roles, such as pretending to be parents, doctors, or teachers. This type of play introduces them to the concepts of different social roles and helps them understand how people work together in a community.
- **Family Play**: By pretending to care for dolls or stuffed animals, toddlers explore social roles within the family structure, such as being a caregiver or a sibling, which fosters an early understanding of family dynamics and relationships.

Sensory Exploration

- **Exploring Community Tools and Objects**: Playing with toy versions of community objects, such as cars, trucks, and construction tools, allows toddlers to learn about different occupations and the tools people use in their daily lives. This also introduces them to the concepts of work and cooperation within a community.
- **Exploring Nature**: Outdoor play, such as gardening or playing with water, helps toddlers develop an understanding of the environment and their connection to nature. It also introduces them to concepts like care for the environment and how communities interact with their surroundings.

Simple Storytelling

- **Books and Stories**: While toddlers may not fully understand all aspects of social studies, books that focus on concepts like families, friends, and community help toddlers recognize the diversity of people and their roles. Reading books about

different cultures or jobs in the community promotes empathy and an early understanding of social structures.
- **Interactive Storytelling**: Through the use of props, puppets, or toys, toddlers can engage in basic storytelling that reflects everyday life in their community. This helps them process social interactions, understand family structures, and develop empathy for others.

Exploration of Places and Spaces

- **Exploring Local Environments**: Toddlers can begin to explore their neighborhood or school environment. Activities such as walks or trips to local parks introduce them to physical places, and through guided conversation, they begin to understand the concept of "places" within a community.
- **Indoor Play with Maps**: Using simple maps or pictures of local landmarks can encourage toddlers to understand their community's layout. For example, they might play with toy versions of buildings, houses, or stores, helping them make connections between these objects and the real-world places they visit.

Social Interactions

- **Playing with Peers**: Social play with other toddlers helps children understand cooperation, sharing, and communication. Learning how to interact with peers fosters early social skills and introduces the concept of community and the importance of working together.
- **Simple Group Activities**: Group activities such as building together with blocks, playing games, or participating in songs or dances teach toddlers about collective participation and the concept of a group or community.

Music and Movement

- **Cultural and Social Songs**: Toddlers enjoy participating in songs that reflect different social situations, such as songs about families or holidays. These songs help toddlers learn about societal norms, cultural practices, and the roles different people play.
- **Dances and Rhythms**: Movement activities like dancing or clapping to rhythm can introduce toddlers to the idea of community celebrations and traditions that involve music and movement, which are common in many social gatherings.

Experiencing Diversity

- **Cultural Awareness**: While toddlers may not fully understand cultural differences, introducing them to diverse toys, clothing, food, or music can help them recognize and appreciate the diversity of people in the world. These activities introduce concepts of culture, diversity, and the interconnectedness of communities.

Infants



Infants are just beginning to develop an awareness of the world around them, and while they may not yet grasp abstract social studies concepts, their early play experiences lay the foundation for understanding the world, their relationships, and their role in the community. For infants, play primarily involves sensory exploration and interactions with caregivers and the environment. However, even at this early age, infants begin to engage with concepts related to social studies, such as family, community, and social roles. Here are ways infants interact with social studies concepts through play:

Interaction with Caregivers

- **Building Social Bonds**: Infants learn about relationships and community through their interactions with caregivers. Through activities such as holding, feeding, and comforting, infants begin to understand the concept of family and attachment. These early social bonds are foundational to understanding the roles people play in society, even before infants can articulate these concepts.
- **Facial Expressions and Communication**: Infants are learning to communicate through facial expressions, sounds, and body movements. They start to recognize different social cues and responses, learning the basics of communication and social interaction, which are central concepts in social studies.

Sensory Exploration of the Environment

- **Exploring Surroundings**: Infants explore their environment using their senses, often through touch, sight, and hearing. These early experiences help them develop an awareness of their surroundings and begin to understand basic concepts of the physical world, such as places, objects, and people.
- **Listening to Social Contexts**: Infants also begin to recognize the sounds of their community, such as voices, music, or ambient noises, which can create an awareness of their place within a larger social environment. For example, hearing a parent talk about family members or different parts of the house can be an introduction to social and physical spaces.

Social Play with Others

- **Peer Interactions**: Even though infants are not fully capable of interacting with peers in a traditional sense, they observe and engage in parallel play. Watching and mimicking other children helps them begin to understand social behaviors and the role of others in their world.
- **Responsive Play**: Infants engage in "serve-and-return" interactions with caregivers and family members, such as smiling, making sounds, or responding to gestures. These interactions foster early socialization and help infants recognize the concept of mutual interaction in social contexts.

Exposure to Family and Community Roles

- **Family-Based Play**: Infants often interact with family members in daily routines, such as dressing, feeding, or playing. Through these experiences, they begin to learn the concept of roles within a family, such as the caregiver, child, or sibling. These early interactions are essential for understanding social structures in later years.
- **Cultural Practices and Traditions**: Through exposure to family traditions, music, or rituals, infants are introduced to early concepts of culture and community. For example, hearing songs, observing celebrations, or being part of daily routines can introduce the idea of social practices and communal living.

Exploration of Objects and Symbols

- **Toys and Objects**: Infants engage with toys and objects that often represent social roles and community life. For instance, playing with dolls, stuffed animals, or toy versions of household objects helps infants start to recognize the roles and relationships associated with those items, like nurturing a doll or mimicking adult actions.
- **Books and Picture Cards**: Even at a very young age, infants benefit from looking at picture books with images of people, animals, and places. This introduces them to the idea of different people and environments, fostering early social awareness.

Recognizing Patterns and Social Structures

- **Routine and Structure**: Infants quickly learn about the predictability of daily routines, which is a foundational concept in social studies. Understanding the structure of their day—when to eat, sleep, or play—helps infants recognize patterns of time and social organization within their immediate environment.

Conclusion

Play is a vital tool for introducing social studies concepts to young children. Through various forms of play, children of different ages engage with their community, relationships, and the world around them, laying the foundation for a deeper understanding of social structures and cultural diversity.

Preschoolers engage in dramatic play, building activities, storytelling, arts and crafts, and geography exploration. These activities help them understand social roles, community infrastructure, cultural diversity, and geographical concepts.

Toddlers explore social studies through pretend play, sensory exploration, simple storytelling, and social interactions. Their play often focuses on immediate surroundings and familiar roles, such as family dynamics and community helpers.

Infants begin to develop an awareness of social studies concepts through sensory exploration and interactions with caregivers. Their early play experiences lay the foundation for understanding relationships, social roles, and community structures.

By understanding how children of different ages engage with social studies through play, educators and caregivers can create meaningful learning experiences that foster cognitive and social development. These experiences help children build a sense of identity and belonging within their community, serving as a cornerstone for their continued learning and understanding of the world.

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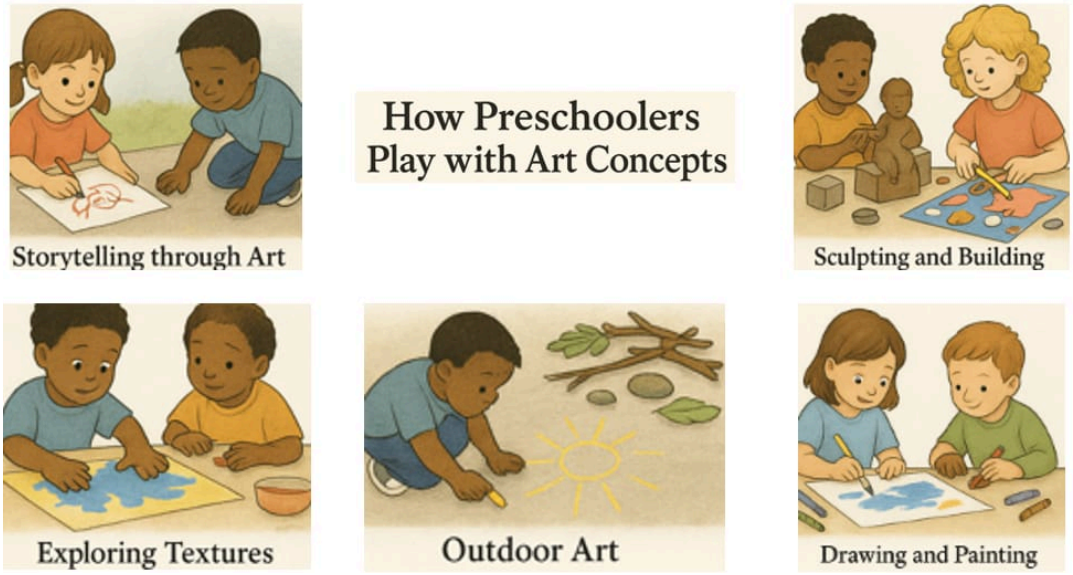
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2.7: Art Play in Early Childhood

Introduction

Art play is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development, providing children with opportunities to explore, create, and express themselves. Through various art activities, children develop essential skills such as fine motor control, sensory awareness, cognitive abilities, and emotional expression. This document explores how infants, toddlers, and preschoolers engage with art concepts, highlighting the benefits and developmental milestones associated with art play at each stage.

Preschoolers



How Preschoolers Play with Art Concepts

Preschoolers engage with art concepts through exploratory, creative, and hands-on activities that allow them to express themselves and develop essential skills. Art at this stage focuses on process over product, encouraging imagination and experimentation.

Drawing and Painting

- **Experimenting with Tools**: Preschoolers use crayons, markers, paintbrushes, and fingers to create marks on paper, learning about lines, shapes, and colors.
- **Color Mixing**: They explore color theory by blending paints to discover new colors, building an understanding of primary and secondary colors.

Sculpting and Building

- **Playdough and Clay**: Sculpting with playdough or clay introduces concepts of form, texture, and spatial awareness.
- **3D Construction**: Using recycled materials or blocks, preschoolers create sculptures, practicing problem-solving and design skills.

Collage and Assemblage

- **Cutting and Gluing**: Preschoolers cut shapes from paper or magazines and glue them to create collages, developing fine motor skills.
- **Layering Materials**: Combining fabrics, beads, and other textures allows them to explore composition and layering.

Exploring Textures

- **Sensory Art**: Activities like finger painting or sand art help preschoolers explore textures while engaging their tactile senses.
- **Printmaking**: Using sponges, stamps, or leaves introduces them to patterns and repetition.

Storytelling through Art

- **Illustrating Stories**: Preschoolers create drawings or paintings to accompany stories, merging literacy and visual art.
- **Dramatic Play Props**: They design simple props or masks, integrating art into pretend play.

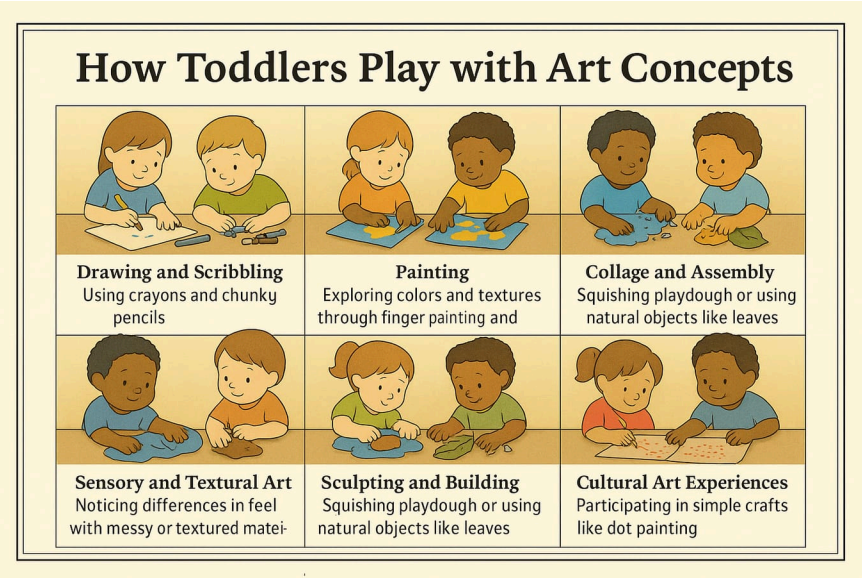
Cultural and Creative Expression

- **Cultural Art Forms**: Exploring art from different cultures, like making paper lanterns or beadwork, fosters an appreciation for diversity.
- **Abstract Art**: Preschoolers freely create without specific instructions, allowing their imagination to guide their work.

Outdoor Art

- **Nature-Based Creations**: Using natural materials like leaves, sticks, or stones, preschoolers engage with environmental art concepts.
- **Sidewalk Chalk**: Drawing on large surfaces outdoors encourages gross motor development and collaborative art.

Toddlers



How Toddlers Play with Art Concepts

Toddlers engage with art concepts through exploratory and sensory-driven activities. Art experiences at this stage focus on process over product, encouraging self-expression, fine motor development, and an understanding of basic artistic elements.

Drawing and Scribbling

- **Using Basic Tools**: Toddlers experiment with crayons, markers, and chunky pencils to create lines and shapes, building early motor skills.
- **Scribble Exploration**: Free scribbling allows toddlers to explore cause-and-effect and develop hand-eye coordination.

Painting

- **Finger Painting**: Toddlers enjoy the sensory experience of finger painting, exploring textures and colors through hands-on play.
- **Using Brushes and Sponges**: Introducing tools like paintbrushes or sponges allows toddlers to experiment with strokes and patterns.

Collage and Assembly

- **Simple Gluing Activities**: Toddlers stick materials like paper scraps, feathers, or fabric to surfaces, practicing grasping and fine motor control.
- **Sticker Play**: Using stickers to create designs introduces spatial awareness and decision-making.

Sensory and Textural Art

- **Exploring Textures**: Materials like sandpaper, cotton balls, or textured paper encourage toddlers to notice differences in feel and touch.
- **Messy Play**: Activities like making art with pudding, yogurt, or shaving cream combine sensory exploration with creativity.

Sculpting and Building

- **Playdough Play**: Toddlers squish, roll, and poke playdough, learning about form, texture, and cause-and-effect.
- **Nature Art**: Using simple natural objects like leaves or rocks introduces early concepts of composition.

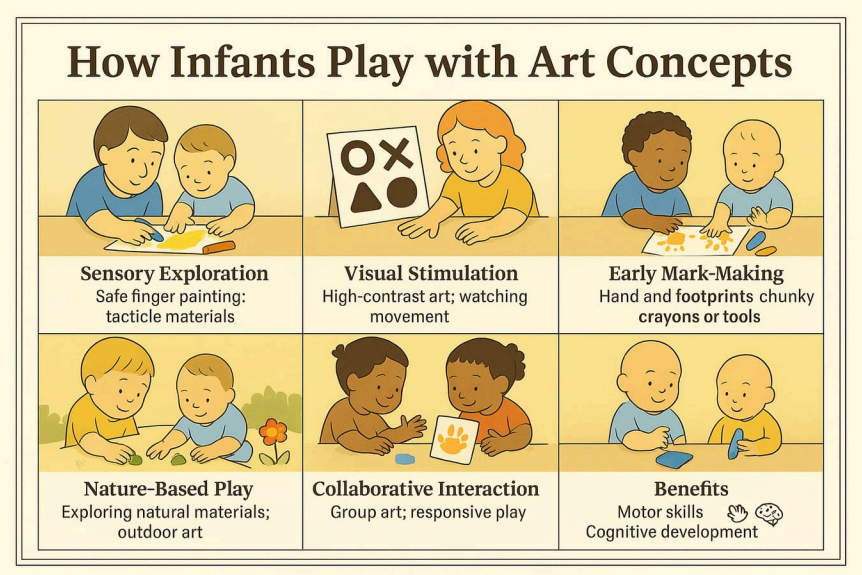
Cultural Art Experiences

- **Exploring Simple Patterns**: Toddlers may participate in making simple cultural crafts, such as dot painting or using stencils, introducing them to art traditions.

Collaborative Art

- **Group Murals**: Working with peers on large paper or canvas helps toddlers practice social interaction and cooperation.
- **Shared Materials**: Using communal supplies teaches toddlers about sharing and taking turns.

Infants



How Infants Play with Art Concepts

Infants explore art concepts primarily through sensory experiences, focusing on touch, sight, and occasionally taste (in safe, supervised activities). Art for infants emphasizes process and exploration rather than product, allowing them to develop motor skills, sensory awareness, and early cognitive abilities.

Sensory Exploration

- **Safe Finger Painting**: Using edible or non-toxic paints, infants spread colors with their hands, discovering textures and cause-and-effect.
- **Tactile Materials**: Exploring fabrics, sponges, or textured surfaces introduces infants to various textures.

Visual Stimulation

- **High-Contrast Art**: Exposing infants to bold patterns, shapes, and colors supports visual development.
- **Watching Movement**: Observing paint or objects being moved on a surface helps infants connect actions with results.

Early Mark-Making

- **Hand and Footprints**: Adults guide infants in creating simple prints, helping them explore their own bodies as tools for art.
- **Chunky Crayons or Tools**: With adult assistance, infants might make marks using large, easy-to-hold crayons or chalk.

Nature-Based Play

- **Exploring Natural Materials**: Infants touch leaves, flowers, or safe natural objects to experience textures and colors in nature.
- **Outdoor Art**: Activities like feeling grass patterns or watching shadows introduce environmental elements to art exploration.

Collaborative Interaction

- **Group Art**: Infants participate in group sensory art activities, like handprint collages, fostering social interaction.
- **Responsive Play**: Caregivers interact with infants during art play, narrating and encouraging exploration to enhance

engagement.

Benefits

- **Motor Skills**: Tactile art activities help infants refine their grasping and hand-eye coordination.
- **Cognitive Development**: Exploring colors, shapes, and textures lays a foundation for recognizing patterns and spatial relationships.
- **Emotional Expression**: Art experiences allow infants to communicate and respond to stimuli in non-verbal ways.

Conclusion

Art play in early childhood is more than just a creative outlet; it is a vital component of holistic development. By engaging in art activities, children enhance their motor skills, cognitive development, and emotional expression. These experiences lay the foundation for future learning and personal growth, fostering a lifelong appreciation for creativity and cultural diversity. Encouraging art play in early childhood settings supports children in becoming confident, imaginative, and well-rounded individuals.

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2.8: Music Play in Early Childhood

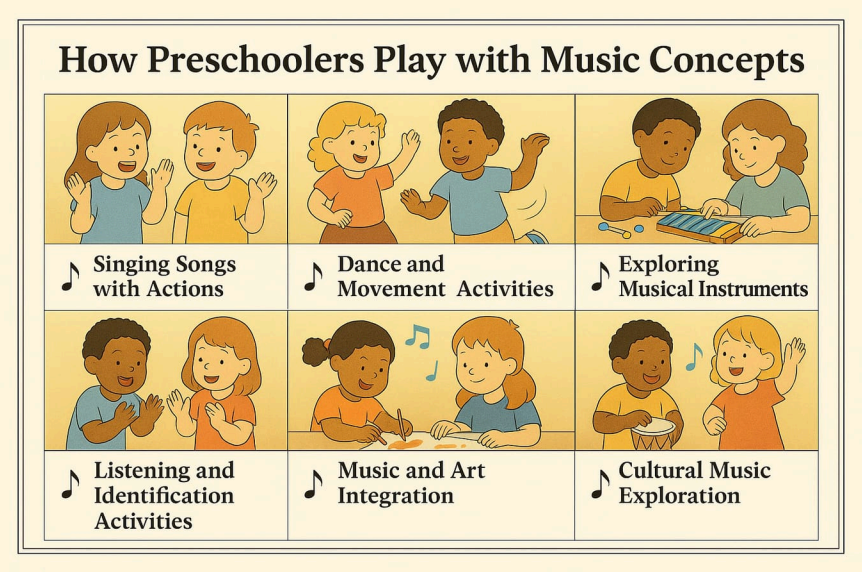
Introduction

Music play is a vital component of early childhood development, offering a multifaceted approach to learning that engages cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth. From infancy through preschool years, children interact with music in ways that foster creativity, enhance listening skills, and build foundational knowledge of rhythm, melody, and expression. This document explores how infants, toddlers, and preschoolers engage with music concepts through various playful and interactive activities, highlighting the developmental benefits and practical applications of music in early childhood education.

Preschoolers

How Preschoolers Play with Music Concepts

Preschoolers engage with **music concepts** through various playful and interactive activities that foster their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Music play helps children develop an understanding of rhythm, melody, and expression while enhancing their listening skills and creativity. Here are several ways preschoolers play with music concepts.



Singing Songs with Actions

- **Action Songs**: Preschoolers enjoy songs that incorporate physical movements, such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," "If You're Happy and You Know It," and "The Hokey Pokey." These songs help children learn body parts, follow directions, and develop coordination.
- **Personalized Songs**: Creating songs that include each child's name or favorite activities makes singing more engaging and helps with memory and language skills.

Dance and Movement Activities

- **Free Dance Time**: Allowing children to dance freely to various types of music encourages creativity and self-expression. It helps them explore different ways of moving and responding to rhythms.
- **Follow the Leader**: In this activity, children mimic the dance moves of the teacher or a peer leader, promoting imitation skills, listening, and social interaction.

Exploring Musical Instruments

- **Instrument Exploration**: Providing simple instruments like tambourines, maracas, xylophones, and drums allows children to experiment with sounds, rhythms, and melodies. This hands-on experience enhances their auditory discrimination and fine motor skills.
- **Group Music Making**: Coordinating a group activity where children play instruments together fosters teamwork, listening skills, and a sense of community.

Rhythm and Beat Activities

- **Clapping and Tapping Rhythms**: Teaching children to clap or tap along to different rhythms helps develop their sense of timing and coordination. Activities can include clapping to the beat of a song or tapping out simple rhythms.
- **Rhythm Games**: Games like "Echo Rhythms," where the teacher claps a rhythm and children repeat it, enhance memory and pattern recognition.

Music and Story Integration

- **Musical Storytime**: Incorporating music into storytelling by adding songs or musical effects related to the story enhances engagement and comprehension. For example, using sound effects for different characters or actions in the story.
- **Creating Soundtracks**: After reading a story, children can create a simple soundtrack using instruments or their voices to represent different parts of the narrative.

Listening and Identification Activities

- **Music Listening Sessions**: Playing various genres of music and discussing what they hear helps children develop listening skills and an appreciation for different musical styles.
- **Identifying Instruments and Sounds**: Playing recordings of different instruments and having children identify them promotes auditory discrimination and knowledge of musical elements.

Music and Art Integration

- **Art Inspired by Music**: Encouraging children to draw or paint while listening to music allows them to express how the music makes them feel, linking auditory and visual creativity.
- **Dance Painting**: Providing large sheets of paper and safe, washable paints while music plays lets children create art through movement, combining physical activity with artistic expression.

Cultural Music Exploration

- **Multicultural Music**: Introducing songs and music from different cultures exposes children to diverse sounds, languages, and traditions, fostering cultural awareness and appreciation.
- **Traditional Dances**: Teaching simple traditional dances from various cultures helps children learn about global diversity and the importance of cultural practices.

Music and Emotional Expression

- **Expressive Singing**: Encouraging children to sing songs that convey different emotions (happy, sad, excited) helps them understand and express their feelings through music.
- **Calm Down Songs**: Using soft, soothing music or lullabies during quiet times or transitions helps children relax and regulate their emotions.

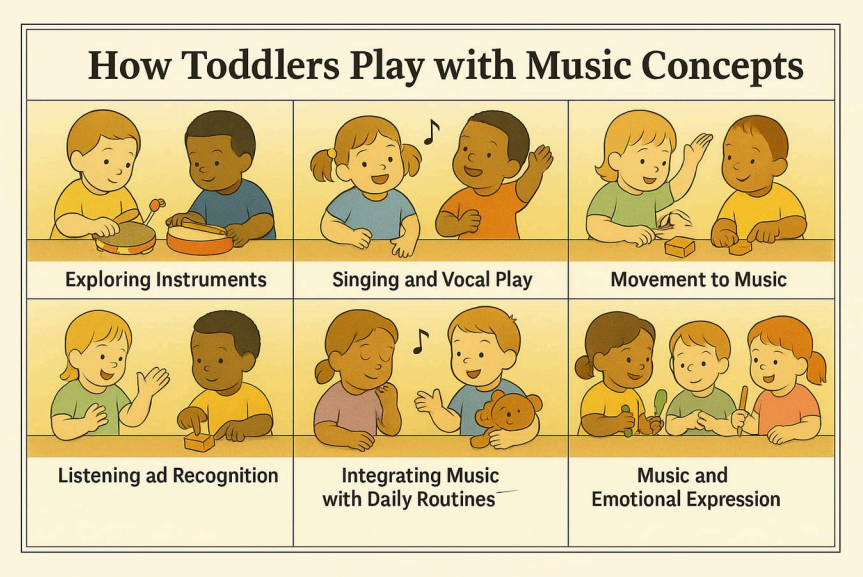
Interactive Music Games

- **Musical Chairs**: A classic game where children walk around chairs while music plays and find a seat when the music stops. This game teaches listening skills, quick thinking, and fair play.

- **Freeze Dance**: Playing music and having children dance freely, then freezing in place when the music stops, helps with impulse control and following instructions.

Toddlers

How Toddlers Play with Music Concepts



Toddlers engage with music concepts through interactive and playful experiences that encourage exploration, creativity, and foundational learning. These activities often combine movement, sound exploration, and sensory engagement, fostering their overall development.

Exploring Instruments

- **Simple Instruments**: Toddlers use instruments like tambourines, shakers, or drums to explore different sounds and rhythms. They experiment with tapping, shaking, and banging to produce sounds, which supports their sensory development and fine motor skills.
- **Cause and Effect**: Playing instruments helps toddlers learn cause-and-effect relationships, such as understanding that hitting a drum produces a loud sound.

Singing and Vocal Play

- **Interactive Songs**: Songs with repetition and actions, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and "The Wheels on the Bus," encourage toddlers to sing along and engage vocally.
- **Sound Imitation**: Toddlers mimic sounds and tones they hear in songs, which helps them explore their vocal range and begin to develop pitch awareness.

Movement to Music

- **Dancing**: Toddlers naturally move their bodies to music, swaying, bouncing, or clapping to the beat. These activities help develop coordination and rhythm.
- **Action Songs**: Songs that involve specific movements, like "If You're Happy and You Know It," teach toddlers to combine music with physical activity.

Rhythmic Activities

- **Clapping and Tapping**: Simple activities like clapping hands or tapping objects in rhythm help toddlers develop a sense of timing and beat recognition.
- **Echo Games**: Caregivers or teachers clap a rhythm, and toddlers try to mimic it, promoting auditory skills and memory.

Listening and Recognition

- **Music Listening**: Playing different types of music exposes toddlers to various tempos, styles, and instruments. They begin to recognize familiar tunes and show preferences for certain songs.
- **Identifying Sounds**: Toddlers are encouraged to point out or identify sounds they hear in songs, such as the beat of a drum or the strum of a guitar.

Integrating Music with Daily Routines

- **Transition Songs**: Using music during transitions, such as cleanup songs or morning welcome songs, helps toddlers connect music with routines and provides predictability.
- **Music in Play**: Incorporating background music or spontaneous singing during free play encourages toddlers to engage with music naturally.

Music and Emotional Expression

- **Expressive Play**: Music helps toddlers express emotions, such as dancing energetically to fast music or swaying to soft tunes.
- **Calming Songs**: Slow, soothing music is used to help toddlers wind down, fostering emotional regulation.

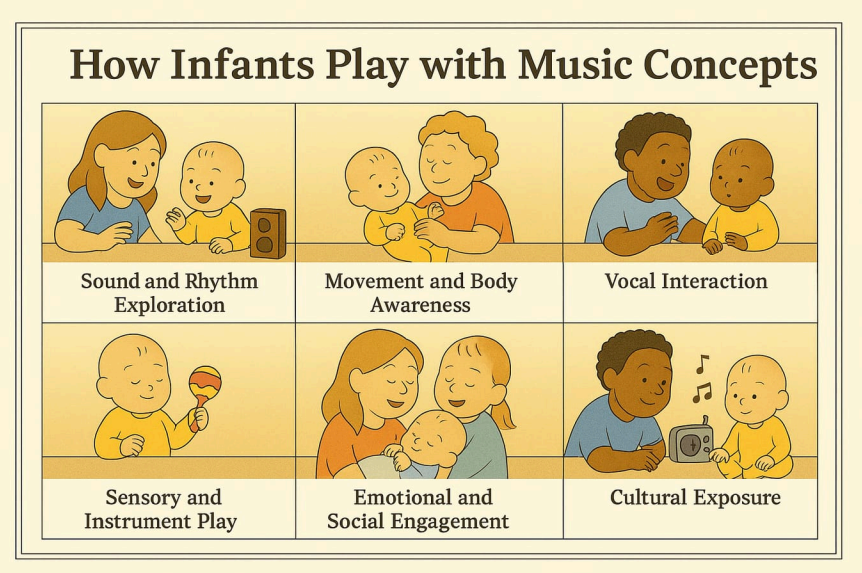
Group Music Activities

- **Circle Time Songs**: Toddlers participate in group singing or instrument play during circle time, learning to engage socially while exploring musical concepts.
- **Parachute and Music Games**: Pairing music with group activities, like lifting and dropping a parachute to the rhythm, promotes collaboration and motor skills.

Infants

How Infants Play with Music Concepts

Infants explore music concepts through sensory-rich and interactive experiences that nurture their auditory and cognitive development. Music play at this stage focuses on building awareness of sound, rhythm, and melody in a way that aligns with their developmental milestones.



Sound and Rhythm Exploration

- **Listening to Music**: Infants respond to music by listening to different tempos and tones. They may coo, babble, or make sounds in response to music, laying the groundwork for vocal development.
- **Simple Beats**: Caregivers tap rhythms on surfaces or clap their hands, and infants often respond by attempting to mimic or move to the beat.

Movement and Body Awareness

- **Bouncing and Rocking**: Caregivers bounce or rock infants to music, helping them connect rhythm to physical sensations.
- **Spontaneous Movements**: Infants wiggle, kick, or wave their arms in response to music, promoting gross motor development.

Vocal Interaction

- **Singing to Infants**: Songs with repetitive lyrics and simple melodies, like lullabies, encourage infants to tune into vocal sounds and patterns.
- **Babbling with Music**: Infants may attempt to mimic pitches or rhythms in their babbling, contributing to early language development.

Sensory and Instrument Play

- **Exploring Sounds**: Infants experiment with soft rattles or baby-safe instruments that produce gentle sounds, learning cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Touch and Feel**: Musical toys with textures and buttons introduce infants to multisensory music experiences.

Emotional and Social Engagement

- **Soothing with Music**: Caregivers use calming melodies to comfort infants, which helps them associate music with emotional regulation.
- **Social Interaction**: Shared musical experiences, like singing or playing with rattles, promote bonding and social responsiveness.

Cultural Exposure

- **Diverse Music Styles**: Playing music from different cultures exposes infants to a variety of rhythms and tonalities, supporting early cultural awareness.

Repetition and Familiarity

- **Recognizing Songs**: Repeated exposure to specific songs helps infants anticipate melodies or react with excitement when they recognize familiar tunes.

Conclusion

Incorporating music play into early childhood education provides a rich, engaging, and effective means of supporting children's overall development. Through activities such as singing, dancing, instrument exploration, and rhythmic games, children develop essential skills that contribute to their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth. By understanding and utilizing the diverse ways in which infants, toddlers, and preschoolers interact with music, educators and caregivers can create enriching environments that nurture a lifelong appreciation for music and its many benefits.

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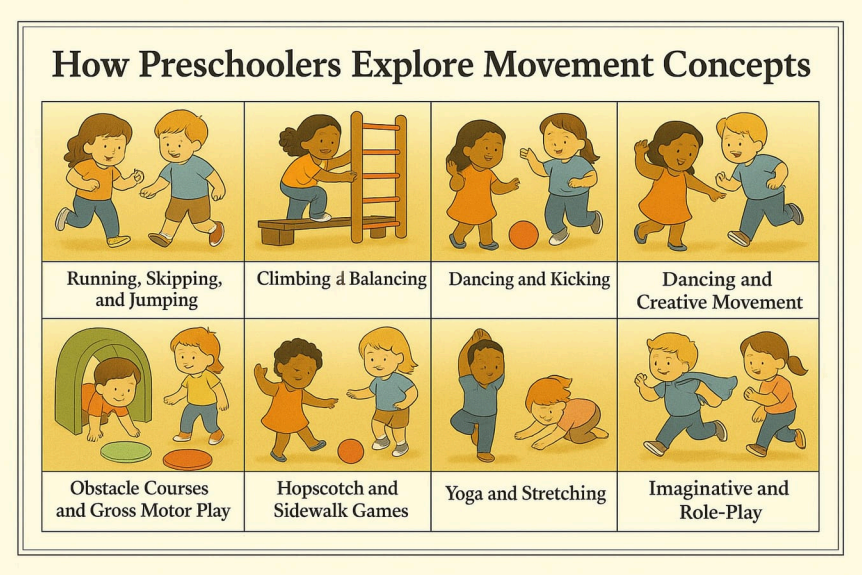
2.9: Movement Play in Early Childhood

Introduction

Movement play is a crucial aspect of early childhood development, encompassing a range of activities that help children build physical, cognitive, and social skills. From infancy through preschool years, children engage in various forms of movement that evolve in complexity and purpose. This document explores how infants, toddlers, and preschoolers interact with movement concepts, highlighting the importance of these activities in their overall growth and development.

Preschoolers

How Preschoolers Explore Movement Concepts



Preschoolers (generally ages 3 to 5) build on the foundational skills they developed as toddlers and engage in increasingly complex movements. Their play becomes more social, imaginative, and coordinated, allowing them to experiment with new ways of moving, balancing, and interacting with others. Here are several ways preschoolers explore and develop movement concepts:

Running, Skipping, and Jumping

- **What it is**: Preschoolers enjoy more purposeful forms of locomotion—running confidently, trying to skip, hopping on one foot, and jumping with greater control.
- **Why it matters**: These movements refine coordination, build leg strength, and help children gauge their own speed, distance, and timing.

Climbing and Balancing

- **What it is**: They tackle playground structures like ladders, slides, and balance beams, often experimenting with new challenges (e.g., climbing higher or walking carefully along a curb).
- **Why it matters**: Climbing and balancing develop core strength, hone body awareness, and boost self-confidence as children learn to assess and manage risk.

Throwing, Catching, and Kicking

- **What it is**: Preschoolers improve hand-eye (and foot-eye) coordination by tossing balls underhand, catching larger balls, kicking a stationary ball, or even beginning to dribble a lightweight ball.
- **Why it matters**: Manipulative skills like throwing, catching, and kicking build fine- and gross-motor coordination and encourage social play (e.g., playing catch with peers or caregivers).

Dancing and Creative Movement

- **What it is**: Preschoolers dance spontaneously to music, perform action songs (like the "Hokey Pokey"), and explore creative movement (pretending to be animals or objects).
- **Why it matters**: Dance and creative movement improve rhythm, self-expression, and imagination while promoting physical fitness and body control.

Obstacle Courses and Gross Motor Play

- **What it is**: Teachers or caregivers may set up simple courses with tunnels, cones, stepping stones, or hula hoops to crawl under, jump through, or step around.
- **Why it matters**: Negotiating obstacles fosters problem-solving ("How do I get through without falling?"), spatial awareness, and helps preschoolers strengthen large muscle groups.

Hopscotch and Sidewalk Games

- **What it is**: Chalk-drawn hopscotch patterns, follow-the-line paths, or balance challenges (walk on a wavy line).
- **Why it matters**: These playful, structured activities promote balance, coordination, counting, and following rules of a simple game (taking turns, waiting in line).

Yoga and Stretching

- **What it is**: Preschool-friendly yoga or stretching exercises—like "tree pose," "downward dog," or simply reaching for the sky.
- **Why it matters**: Stretching builds flexibility and body awareness, and yoga-like poses help preschoolers practice mindfulness and focus on breathing.

Cooperative Group Games

- **What it is**: Group games like "Duck, Duck, Goose," "Musical Chairs," or "Freeze Dance" involve running, stopping, and quick direction changes in response to cues.
- **Why it matters**: These group activities foster social skills (taking turns, following rules) and refine children's ability to start, stop, and change motion on cue.

Imaginative and Role-Play

- **What it is**: Preschoolers use movement to act out stories or scenarios—pretending to be astronauts walking in space, animals creeping through the jungle, or superheroes leaping tall buildings.
- **Why it matters**: This type of play encourages creativity, language development, and a deeper connection between thought and physical action.

Outdoor Exploration

- **What it is**: Running on grass, stepping on stones, balancing on tree stumps, rolling down small hills, or exploring nature trails.
- **Why it matters**: Uneven surfaces and natural environments challenge children's balance, coordination, and problem-solving, further enhancing their sensory and motor development.

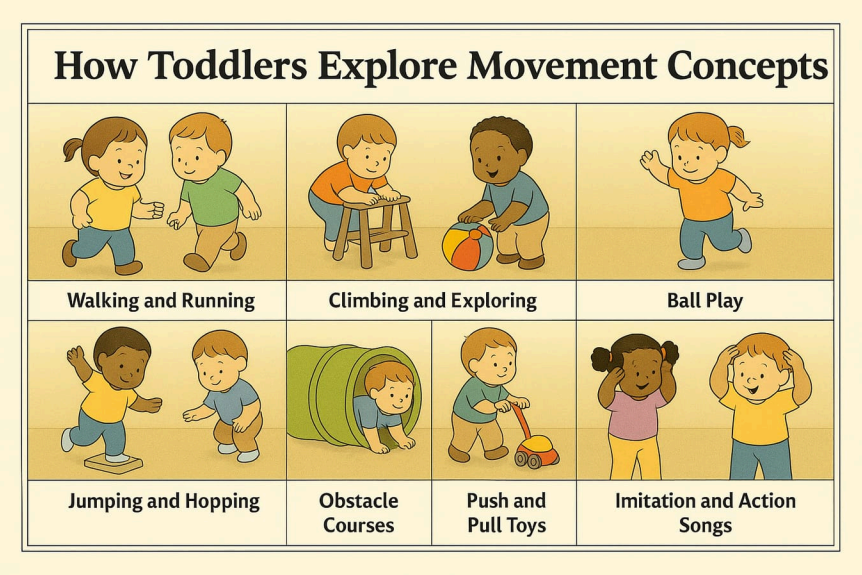
Why It Matters

- **Physical Development**: Preschoolers build strength, endurance, and coordination through active movement.
- **Cognitive Growth**: Movement experiences reinforce spatial awareness, problem-solving, and the ability to follow multi-step instructions.
- **Social and Emotional Skills**: Cooperative games and group dance foster turn-taking, empathy, and teamwork.
- **Self-Expression**: Activities like dance, yoga, and imaginative play help children explore emotions and creativity, integrating mind and body.

By engaging in a wide range of playful movement activities, preschoolers continue refining their motor skills, gain confidence in their bodies, and lay the groundwork for lifelong physical literacy.

Toddlers

How Preschoolers Explore Movement Concepts



Toddlers (approximately 1 to 3 years old) continue developing their gross and fine motor skills through active, exploratory play. Their play becomes more purposeful and independent, allowing them to experiment with new ways to move, balance, and navigate their surroundings. Here are some ways toddlers engage with movement concepts:

Walking and Running

- **What it is**: Toddlers eagerly practice walking, often moving quickly into running as soon as they're stable on their feet.
- **Why it matters**: Rapid changes in direction or speed improve balance, coordination, and spatial awareness.

Climbing and Exploring

- **What it is**: From climbing onto furniture to using playground structures, toddlers explore vertical movement.
- **Why it matters**: Climbing helps develop strength, problem-solving ("How do I get up/down safely?"), and confidence in their own abilities.

Jumping and Hopping

- **What it is**: Simple jumping in place or off a small step, sometimes progressing to hopping on one foot (closer to age 3).
- **Why it matters**: Jumping refines coordination, leg muscle strength, and understanding of their body's movement

possibilities.

Dancing and Rhythmic Movement

- **What it is**: Toddlers love to sway, bounce, and spin to music, copying movements they see or just expressing themselves.
- **Why it matters**: Dance enhances balance and rhythm while also fostering creativity and body awareness.

Ball Play

- **What it is**: Rolling, tossing, kicking, or chasing balls of different sizes.
- **Why it matters**: Ball play sharpens hand-eye coordination, timing, and encourages social interaction when playing in groups.

Obstacle Courses

- **What it is**: Simple setups with pillows, tunnels, or low stepping blocks that toddlers can climb over, crawl under, or step around.
- **Why it matters**: Navigating obstacles hones spatial awareness, gross motor planning, and problem-solving skills.

Push and Pull Toys

- **What it is**: Toddler-friendly toys on wheels or with handles (e.g., wagons, poppers, or push walkers).
- **Why it matters**: Pushing and pulling build upper-body strength and coordination while boosting confidence in walking and maneuvering objects.

Balancing Activities

- **What it is**: Toddlers might try standing on one foot or walking along a low curb or beam with assistance.
- **Why it matters**: These activities challenge core strength and stability, introducing the concept of controlled movement and balance.

Imitation and Action Songs

- **What it is**: Toddlers learn simple movements like “head, shoulders, knees, and toes,” or follow along with finger plays and other action songs.
- **Why it matters**: Copying movements promotes body awareness and reinforces vocabulary for body parts, directions (up/down), and movement descriptors (fast/slow).

Rough-and-Tumble Play

- **What it is**: Safe, supervised rolling, gentle wrestling, or playful tumbling with adults or other children.
- **Why it matters**: This type of play fosters social bonding, teaches limits (“too rough” vs “just right”), and further refines motor control.

Why It Matters

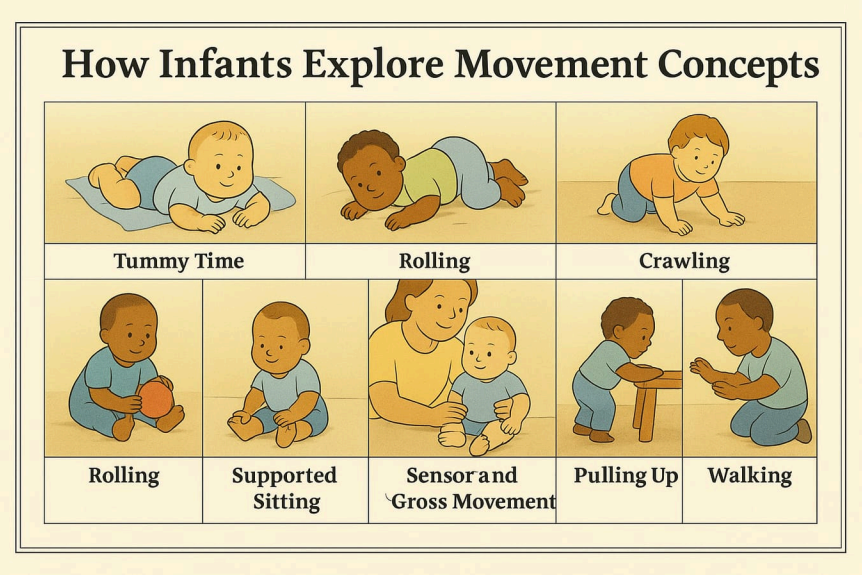
- **Physical Development**: Toddlers gain muscle strength, coordination, balance, and agility through constant movement.
- **Spatial Awareness**: Learning to navigate their environment (stepping over, around, and through obstacles) builds cognitive mapping skills.
- **Body Control and Confidence**: Through trial and error, toddlers figure out their limits—how fast they can run, how high they can climb—which supports self-assurance and risk assessment.
- **Social Interaction**: Cooperative or parallel play in group settings exposes toddlers to turn-taking, sharing, and joint movement adventures.

All these playful movement experiences help toddlers develop a foundation for more complex physical activities, enhancing their

independence and overall growth.

Infants

How Preschoolers Explore Movement Concepts



Infants (roughly birth to 12 months) explore and develop movement concepts through playful, self-directed activity and sensory experiences. While “play” in infancy looks quite different from older children’s play, these early interactions lay the foundation for physical development, spatial awareness, and body control. Here are some ways infants engage with movement concepts.

Tummy Time

- **What it is**: Placing infants on their stomachs for supervised, short periods during playtime.
- **Why it matters**: Tummy time helps strengthen neck, shoulder, and arm muscles. As infants lift their heads and push up on their arms, they gain an early awareness of weight-bearing and body support.

Reaching and Grasping

- **What it is**: Infants stretch their arms toward toys, people, or objects and attempt to grip them.
- **Why it matters**: Reaching fosters hand-eye coordination, depth perception, and the beginnings of spatial awareness (“how far something is” and “how to move to get it”).

Rolling Over

- **What it is**: As muscle strength grows, babies learn to roll from tummy to back and back to tummy.
- **Why it matters**: This milestone demonstrates an infant’s emerging control over trunk and hip muscles. Rolling also broadens an infant’s perspective, as they experience their environment from different positions.

Kicking and Leg Movement

- **What it is**: Infants often kick their legs or pedal them in the air, especially when lying on their backs.
- **Why it matters**: Kicking is an early form of exploring the lower body’s range of motion, helping strengthen leg muscles and core stability, which eventually aids in crawling and standing.

Scooting and Crawling

- **What it is**: Infants experiment with moving forward or backward on their bellies ("army crawl") or with their arms and knees.
- **Why it matters**: Crawling teaches coordinated movement between arms and legs, building spatial navigation skills ("I can move toward a toy across the room").

Bouncing and Rocking

- **What it is**: When supported in a standing or sitting position, infants may bend their knees to bounce or rock back and forth.
- **Why it matters**: These small, repetitive motions help infants learn to balance body weight and refine muscle control. It's also a joyful sensory experience that strengthens core and leg muscles.

Supported Sitting and Standing

- **What it is**: With an adult's help or when propped with pillows, infants learn to maintain sitting balance. Eventually, they try standing with support (like holding onto furniture).
- **Why it matters**: Practicing sitting and standing engages the core and postural muscles. Infants build balance, stability, and the confidence needed for cruising (walking while holding onto furniture).

Exploring Different Textures and Surfaces

- **What it is**: Infants placed on mats, carpets, or varying textures explore movement on different surfaces.
- **Why it matters**: Different textures and levels of friction require infants to adapt their body movements. This fosters sensory-motor integration ("How does my body move on a slippery versus a rough surface?").

Action-Reaction Play

- **What it is**: Activities like kicking at a mobile, swiping at a hanging toy, or pushing objects away.
- **Why it matters**: Infants learn about cause and effect—"If I move my arm or leg this way, the toy sways or makes a noise." This helps them build intentional movement skills.

Mirroring and Imitation

- **What it is**: Infants naturally begin to mimic others' expressions and simple movements (e.g., "clapping," wiggling, or nodding).
- **Why it matters**: Observing and imitating caregivers or siblings fosters social interaction and teaches infants that their own body can do what they see in others, boosting self-awareness and motor planning.

Why It Matters

- **Physical Development**: Early, repetitive movement experiences develop muscle strength, coordination, and overall motor skills.
- **Body Awareness**: Infants begin to understand how their bodies move in space (proprioception) and how their limbs relate to each other.
- **Sensory Integration**: Movements combined with touch, sound, and visual feedback improve sensory processing.
- **Cognitive and Emotional Growth**: Through movement, infants explore cause and effect and gain a sense of agency—realizing "I can make things happen!" This boosts self-confidence and curiosity. Overall, these playful explorations with movement help infants transition from reflexive actions to more purposeful motor skills, setting the stage for a lifetime of active learning.

Conclusion

Engaging in movement play from infancy through preschool years is essential for children's holistic development. These activities not only enhance physical abilities such as strength, coordination, and balance but also contribute to cognitive growth, social

skills, and emotional well-being. By providing opportunities for children to explore and experiment with different types of movement, caregivers and educators can support the development of lifelong physical literacy and a love for active play.

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3: SETTING THE STAGE FOR PLAY -- ENVIRONMENTS FOR SSAMM

3.1: The Role of the Classroom Environment in Supporting Children's Physical Development

3.2: How the Environment Supports Social Emotional Development

3.3: The Role of the Classroom Environment in Supporting Children's Language Development

3.4: How the Environment Supports Development in Approaches to Learning

3.5: How the Classroom Environment Supports Cognitive Development

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3.1: The Role of the Classroom Environment in Supporting Children's Physical Development

Learning Objectives

After reading this section of the chapter, students will be able to:

- Identify the role of the Environment as a “Teacher.”
- Identify how the environment supports physical development

Introduction

The **environment** is often labeled as a **“teacher”** in Early Childhood Education. The meaning behind this label is that if an environment is intentionally created with developmentally appropriate practice in mind, it will serve to assist with learning as well as classroom management. A quality early childhood educational environment, whether it is indoor, outdoor, or temporal, should encourage engagement, stimulate learning, and promote growth in all areas of development.

The effective preschool teacher recognizes, understands, and respects the values of children’s families and communities and attempts to make the preschool environment as congruent with those values as possible.[1]

The environment affects every aspect of how children develop and learn and how teachers teach. In the article Inspired by Reggio Emilia: Emergent Curriculum in Relationship-Driven Learning Environments, Mary Ann Biermeier summarizes Loris Malaguzzi’s concept of the **third teacher**:

“...the environment plays a central role in the process of making learning meaningful. So important was this notion that Malaguzzi defined the environment as the third teacher (Gandini 2011). Malaguzzi’s third teacher is a flexible environment, responsive to the need for teachers and children to create learning together. Fostering creativity through the work of young hands manipulating objects or making art, it is an environment that reflects the values we want to communicate to children. Moreover, the classroom environment can help shape a child’s identity as a powerful player in his or her own life and the lives of others. To foster such an environment, teachers must go deeper than what is merely seen at eye level and develop a deep understanding of the underlying principles and of children’s thinking, questions, and curiosities.” [81]

The classroom environment significantly influences children's physical development. A thoughtfully designed space promotes exploration and movement, which are crucial for developing motor skills, coordination, and overall health. This idea aligns with the Reggio Emilia approach, where the environment is considered the "third teacher," playing an active role in shaping children's learning experiences. Building on the foundational concepts of the "third teacher," this section delves into how various elements of the classroom environment specifically support children's physical development through structured movement opportunities, accessible materials, independence, outdoor play, and integrated routines.



The Role of the Classroom Environment in Supporting Children's Physical Development

Encouraging Movement and Exploration for Gross and Fine Motor Development

The classroom must allow children to move freely, as active play fosters both gross motor development (large muscle movements) and fine motor development (precise hand and finger movements). A well-planned space enables both structured and free movement, helping children refine coordination and strength.

Gross Motor Development

Gross motor skills involve large muscle movements that help children build strength, coordination, and balance. The classroom environment should encourage activities that promote these essential physical skills, ensuring children have ample space to move freely and explore.

- **Social Studies**: Movement-based role-playing, such as marching like soldiers or mimicking animal movements from different regions, enhances both physical and social development.
- **Art**: Collaborative projects where children stretch, bend, or reach for materials strengthen their muscles while engaging creatively.
- **Music & Movement**: Dancing and rhythmic exercises help children refine balance and coordination, promoting both physical agility and self-expression.

Fine Motor Development

Fine motor skills involve precise hand and finger movements that enhance children's dexterity and hand-eye coordination. The classroom should provide materials and activities that allow children to strengthen these small muscle movements through manipulation, grasping, and sorting.

- **Social Studies**: Handling small tools, organizing artifacts, and arranging miniature cultural figures promote fine motor practice.
- **Art**: Cutting with scissors, painting with brushes, or grasping markers refines dexterity.
- **Music & Movement**: Playing instruments like tambourines, maracas, and xylophones requires controlled finger movements.

Supporting Fine Motor Skills Through Accessible Materials

Providing accessible materials encourages children to manipulate, grasp, stack, and sort, which improves hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

- **Social Studies**: Props such as cultural artifacts, miniature figures, and maps help children refine their ability to grasp, sort,

and organize materials.
- **Art**: Tools like paintbrushes, markers, scissors, and clay allow children to refine their grasp and cutting abilities.
- **Music & Movement**: Instruments such as xylophones, maracas, and tambourines require precise hand movements.

Encouragement of Independent Action

A child-friendly environment promotes autonomy and confidence by ensuring materials are placed within easy reach, allowing children to explore freely.

- **Social Studies**: Props like maps, dolls, and cultural items should be arranged for children to manipulate and organize independently.
- **Art**: Supplies such as crayons, clay, paintbrushes, and paper should be easily accessible.
- **Music & Movement**: Allowing children to select and play rhythm instruments independently helps them practice coordination.

Outdoor Play and Nature-Based Interaction

Outdoor play promotes physical agility, endurance, and sensory awareness through natural materials.

- **Social Studies**: Role-playing activities incorporating movement patterns from different cultures.
- **Art**: Painting with sticks, arranging leaves into collages, or using chalk to draw on sidewalks.
- **Music & Movement**: Outdoor rhythm games, jumping, and stomping along with songs.

Structured Routines and Transitions for Physical Development

Daily routines and transitions provide repeated opportunities for fine motor practice, organization, and independent movement.

- **Social Studies**: Setting up culturally diverse materials at mealtime, organizing play-based props, or cleaning up after activities.
- **Art**: Preparing surfaces for painting, cleaning brushes, and handling stencils.
- **Music & Movement**: Transition routines such as singing a song before shifting activities or using rhythmic motions while cleaning.

Comparison of Gross vs. Fine Motor Activities in the Classroom

The following table highlights the distinction between gross and fine motor activities in different learning areas:

Comparison of Gross and Fine Motor Activities

Classroom Area	Gross Motor Activities	Fine Motor Activities
Social Studies	Marching, mimicking animal movements, and exploring cultural dances.	Handling miniature figures, sorting artifacts, and organizing maps.
Art	Large-scale painting, sculpting with clay, and stretching to reach supplies.	Using paintbrushes, scissors, markers, or beads to refine hand-eye coordination.
Music & Movement	Dancing, jumping to rhythms, and engaging in movement-based songs.	Playing small instruments like tambourines, xylophones, or maracas.

Classroom Area	Gross Motor Activities	Fine Motor Activities
Outdoor Play	Running, climbing, and balancing on different terrains.	Collecting natural materials (leaves, twigs, rocks) for projects, using chalk for outdoor drawing.
Structured Routines	Physical movements for cleaning up, transitioning through activities.	Using utensils, fastening buttons/ zippers, and handling small objects during tasks like setting the table.

Conclusion

The classroom environment serves as an active facilitator in children's physical development, reinforcing both gross and fine motor skills through movement, accessible materials, independence, outdoor engagement, and structured routines. By thoughtfully designing learning spaces, educators empower children to explore, create, and develop autonomy, helping them grow as physically competent, creative, and socially engaged learners.

References

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3.2: How the Environment Supports Social Emotional Development

Learning Objectives

After reading this section of the chapter, students will be able to:

- Explain how the classroom environment acts as a 'third teacher' in supporting social-emotional development.

Introduction

The classroom environment plays a critical role in fostering children's social and emotional development. Just as a well-designed space encourages exploration and physical activity to support motor skills, coordination, and overall health, it also facilitates emotional growth and social competence. A thoughtfully arranged environment creates opportunities for children to express themselves, build relationships, and learn to manage their emotions. This environment fosters self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, which are essential for both emotional well-being and successful physical engagement. By fostering both social-emotional and physical development, the classroom supports children's holistic growth, enabling them to thrive in all aspects of life.

As stated in "The Integrated Nature of Learning" by the California Department of Education:

> Early childhood teachers design the daily routines as rich opportunities for children to participate actively and to use their emerging skills and ideas in meaningful situations. Equally important are the ways in which teachers use interactions and conversations with children to support learning. [1]

The Environment as the "Third Teacher"

The concept of the environment as the 'third teacher' applies to all domains of learning and development. This emphasizes that the classroom environment should not only support physical development but also nurture social and emotional growth. Just as the environment is intentionally designed to promote active play, coordination, and motor skills, it must also provide opportunities for children to engage in emotional expression, peer interactions, and self-regulation. By creating a supportive, responsive environment, children are given the tools to manage emotions, develop empathy, and learn social skills, which in turn helps them to fully engage in physical activities and the learning process as a whole. The environment, as the 'third teacher,' plays a vital role in bridging physical, social, and emotional development.

Encouraging Emotional Expression and Regulation

A classroom environment designed for social and emotional development not only encourages emotional expression but also nurtures self-regulation. Just as physical spaces provide room for movement and exploration, social-emotional areas of the classroom, such as calming spaces or group areas for emotional discussions, help children develop emotional intelligence. When children learn to express and regulate their emotions, they can better engage in physical activities, as emotional regulation directly influences how children manage stress, interact with peers, and take on new challenges.



Social Studies

Social studies lessons on community helpers or emotions across cultures can help children understand how people express and manage their feelings in different contexts. Teachers might introduce stories or puppet shows depicting different emotional situations, helping children discuss and identify feelings, which promotes self-regulation and empathy.

Art

Creating emotion-based artwork or using playdough to express feelings can help children externalize their emotions. Art activities such as painting a 'feeling' or creating a 'calming color' collage can help children identify and express their emotions, further nurturing emotional intelligence.

Music & Movement

In music and movement, using songs that encourage emotional identification (like 'If You're Happy and You Know It') helps children learn to express emotions through their bodies. This fosters emotional regulation, as children use physical movement to manage feelings like excitement or frustration.

Promoting Social Competence Through Interactions and Play

The classroom environment promotes social competence by offering ample opportunities for peer interactions, which in turn support emotional development. The physical classroom setting, such as cooperative play areas or shared project spaces, encourages children to practice social skills like negotiation, turn-taking, and empathy. These emotional skills are essential for engaging in physical activities that require collaboration, such as team sports, group art projects, or dramatic role-playing.



Social Studies

Social studies activities, such as simple discussions about different communities or historical figures, can help children understand social roles and the importance of empathy. Creating scenarios where children act as family members or community helpers promotes social skills like negotiation, turn-taking, and cooperation. These scenarios also help them recognize and respect emotions within others.

Art

Group art projects allow children to practice social competence as they work together to create something meaningful. In a group mural or collaborative sculpture project, children must negotiate space, share materials, and engage in meaningful discussions, all of which foster empathy and cooperation.

Music & Movement

Group dance activities and musical games promote teamwork and social skills. By moving together to rhythm or singing in a circle, children practice listening to and understanding the needs of others, working collaboratively, and taking turns. For instance, taking turns leading a dance or choosing a song helps children practice social skills in a playful, non-threatening way.

Fostering Independence and Confidence

A child-friendly classroom environment fosters emotional growth by encouraging independence and confidence. Accessible materials empower children to make their own choices, fostering a sense of autonomy. This sense of independence directly translates to their physical development, as children are encouraged to independently engage in activities like using climbing equipment or experimenting with art materials, thus promoting physical and emotional confidence. As children learn to navigate their environment and solve problems on their own, they gain a sense of accomplishment and self-regulation.



Social Studies

Encouraging children to explore the roles of community helpers (such as doctors, firefighters, or teachers) through dramatic play supports confidence-building. When children take on roles, they learn independence by making decisions, solving problems, and learning how to take responsibility for their actions.

Art

Accessible art materials encourage independence as children select their own supplies and decide how to express their ideas. For example, children can create their own emotions wheel, where they select colors that match how they feel, promoting self-awareness and confidence in expressing emotions.

Music & Movement

Providing children with the autonomy to select instruments to play or rhythm games to engage in helps build confidence. Activities like free dancing or spontaneous music-making allow children to take initiative and express themselves, while also developing physical coordination and emotional confidence.

Providing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Spaces

An inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes cultural awareness helps children feel valued and respected. A classroom that embraces cultural differences through materials and activities provides children with emotional support, allowing them to express themselves confidently. This inclusivity also extends to physical development, as children who feel secure and understood are more likely to engage in physical activities, such as participating in group sports, exploring outdoor spaces, or even trying new physical tasks.



Providing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Spaces

Social Studies

The classroom environment can include culturally diverse materials that help children connect emotionally to different communities. For example, through storytelling, music, and art that reflect different cultural experiences, children learn about the diversity of emotions and cultural norms related to emotional expression. This promotes inclusivity and empathy.

Art

Art activities that reflect diverse cultures help children feel valued. For example, creating a multicultural collage where each child adds a piece that represents their cultural identity helps children express pride in their heritage while also learning about others' backgrounds.

Music & Movement

Incorporating music from different cultures exposes children to diverse emotional expressions and helps them understand that feelings can be expressed in various ways. Singing songs in different languages or moving to rhythms from various parts of the world also teaches children about diversity and empathy in a fun, engaging way.

Outdoor Play and Social-Emotional Growth

Outdoor play is essential for social and emotional development, providing a natural space for children to practice social skills, manage emotions, and explore their environment.



Social Studies

Outdoor play areas that reflect different environments (like urban or rural settings) allow children to simulate real-life scenarios, such as playing store or working together to build a house. These activities promote teamwork, empathy, and emotional regulation as children navigate these roles.

Art

Outdoor art activities can include using natural materials like leaves, sticks, or rocks to express emotions. Children can create nature-based collages that reflect their feelings or environmental influences, helping them to reflect on the emotional aspects of their surroundings.

Music & Movement

Singing songs or playing music outdoors that involve physical movement encourages emotional expression through actions. Songs about animals or nature, combined with outdoor movement, help children express joy or relaxation through sound and motion, enhancing their emotional intelligence.

Integrating Developmental Theories into Classroom Environments[2]



Jean Piaget and the Cognitive Theory:

- **Active Learning:** Environments should encourage active learning, stimulate skills of inquiry, and promote problem-solving and risk-taking. For example, materials should be placed low on shelves for easy access, and shelves should be labeled with pictures to encourage children to return materials to their proper place. A stimulating environment encourages knowledge seeking and cognitive development.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Active learning environments foster independence, confidence, and resilience. Children learn to manage their emotions, develop a positive self-concept, and build social skills through collaborative activities.

Lev Vygotsky and the Sociocultural Theory:

- **Meaningful Interactions:** Environments should provide opportunities for meaningful interactions that challenge children within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) and include scaffolding through child-child and child-adult interactions.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Collaborative learning and social interactions promote empathy, communication skills, and emotional regulation. Children learn to understand and respect others' perspectives, which enhances their social competence.

Behavioral Theory:

- **Consistent Routines:** Daily routines must be consistent, and expectations of behavior should be clearly defined.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Consistent routines and clear expectations help children feel secure and understand what is expected of them, promoting positive behavior and emotional regulation.

Erik Erikson:

- **Trust and Autonomy:** Environments should provide opportunities for children to develop feelings of trustworthiness, autonomy, and initiative. The environment should include areas where children feel safe, can play independently, and make choices throughout the day.
- **Social-Emotional Development:** Trust, autonomy, and initiative are foundational for emotional well-being. Children who feel safe and capable are more likely to develop a positive self-image and engage confidently in social interactions.

Visual Representation of Social-Emotional Learning in Classroom Areas

Social Emotional Learning by Classroom Area

Classroom Area	Encouraging Emotional Expression and Regulation	Promoting Social Competence Through Interactions and Play	Fostering Independence and Confidence	Providing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Spaces
Social Studies	Role-play cultural celebrations, mimic greetings, and act as community members	Discuss different communities, act as family members, or community helpers	Explore the roles of community helpers through dramatic play	Use culturally diverse materials, storytelling, music, and art
Art	Create emotion masks, draw self-portraits, and use diverse materials	Group murals, collaborative sculpture projects	Select your own supplies, create an emotions wheel	Create multicultural collages reflecting cultural identity
Music & Movement	Sing songs from different cultures, and dance to various musical styles	Group dance activities, musical games	Select instruments to play, and engage in rhythm games	Incorporate music from different cultures, and sing songs in different languages
Outdoor Play	Simulate real-life scenarios, play store, build a house	Use natural materials to express emotions, create nature-based collages	Sing songs or play music outdoors with physical movement	

References

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3.3: The Role of the Classroom Environment in Supporting Children's Language Development

Learning Objectives

After reading this section of the chapter, students will be able to:

- Identify how the environment supports language development.

Introduction

The classroom environment plays a crucial role in supporting children's language development. A well-designed space that encourages communication, conversation, and interaction provides children with rich opportunities to develop both receptive (listening and understanding) and expressive (speaking) language skills. Through meaningful interactions with peers, caregivers, and materials, children acquire vocabulary, grammar, and conversation skills necessary for literacy and cognitive development. This environment offers children a space to explore, share, and communicate with each other, fostering their development as competent speakers and listeners.

The Environment as the "Third Teacher"

The environment becomes ‘the third teacher' as a thoughtfully arranged space actively supports language development. Just as the physical space is intentionally designed to encourage movement and physical development, it must also promote opportunities for verbal expression, social interaction, and language play. A language-rich environment includes materials, visual aids, and spaces that encourage both independent and collaborative interactions, giving children the tools to practice and expand their vocabulary. By providing a language-rich environment, children are offered continuous opportunities to expand their vocabulary, practice sentence structures, and develop their communication skills through guided and independent interactions.

Teachers plan the physical space to create contexts for learning. This includes arranging materials and furnishings in a way that encourages children to engage in activities that promote language use and communication. Additionally, teachers plan the social environment by defining roles, responsibilities, and guidance during daily routines and spontaneous interactions. This helps children understand social cues and practice communication skills.

Encouraging Verbal Communication and Language Play

A classroom environment designed to encourage verbal communication and language play supports both the acquisition of vocabulary and the development of communication skills. Just as children benefit from having access to movement areas for physical development, they also thrive in spaces that provide opportunities for verbal expression and exploration of language.



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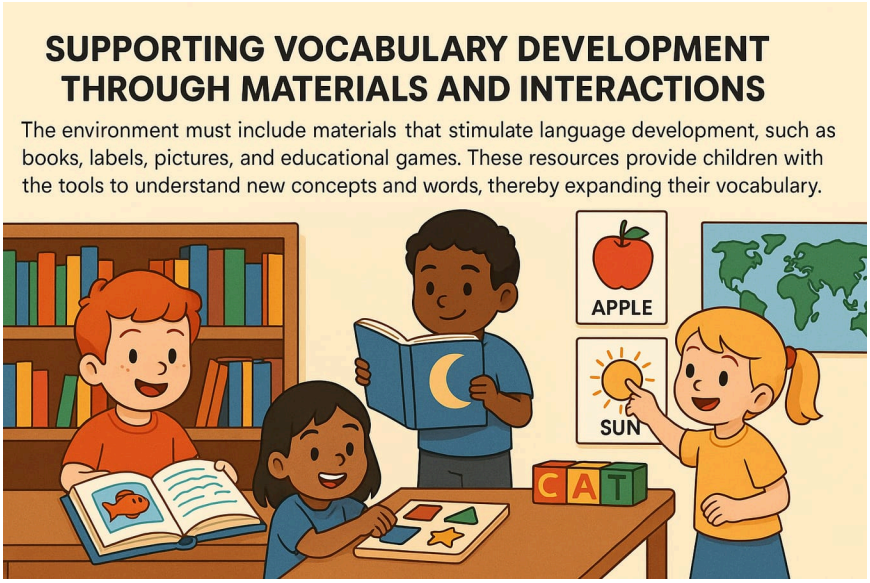
Social Studies: In preschool, children can engage in simple role-play activities such as pretending to be animals or people from different parts of the world. For instance, they might play 'farmers' or 'shopkeepers' and use words related to their roles, such as 'plant,' 'harvest,' or 'sell.' This helps children build vocabulary related to community roles and daily life.

Art: Children can engage in language play as they describe what they are drawing or painting. For example, a child drawing a picture of a house might say, 'This is my house. The door is red!' These descriptions help expand their vocabulary and encourage them to form sentences.

Music & Movement: Singing simple songs or chants that involve hand motions (like 'If You're Happy and You Know It') helps children use language while practicing actions. Through this, they reinforce vocabulary like 'clap,' 'stomp,' and 'turn around' while enhancing their motor skills.

Supporting Vocabulary Development Through Materials and Interactions

The environment must include materials that stimulate language development, such as books, labels, pictures, and educational games. These resources provide children with the tools to understand new concepts and words, thereby expanding their vocabulary.



Social Studies: Teachers can use picture books and toys that represent different cultures and communities to help children learn new vocabulary. For example, a storybook about a family from another country can introduce words like 'mountain,' 'village,' or 'river,' giving children opportunities to practice new words.

Art: In the art area, materials should be labeled clearly, helping children connect spoken words to objects. For instance, when children use crayons, they can learn words like 'color,' 'draw,' 'blue,' and 'red.' Art provides opportunities for verbalizing emotions and describing their creative work.

Music & Movement: Music activities with simple instruments like tambourines or maracas can help children practice vocabulary related to sounds (e.g., 'loud,' 'soft,' 'fast,' and 'slow'). Singing songs with repetitive phrases helps reinforce new vocabulary and sentence structures.

Encouraging Listening and Comprehension Skills

Listening is an essential component of language development. The classroom environment must foster listening skills by providing opportunities for children to hear different types of language, including instructions, stories, and peer conversations.



Social Studies: During circle time, preschoolers can listen to stories or discussions about various cultures, countries, or communities. For instance, a book about 'how people live in the desert' can introduce words like 'sand,' 'cactus,' and 'hot.' Teachers can ask questions like, 'What do you think they drink in the desert?' to enhance comprehension.

Art: When children are involved in group art projects, the teacher can ask them questions like, 'What colors do you see on your painting?' or 'Can you describe what you're making?' This encourages children to listen carefully to both the teacher and their peers, building their listening and comprehension skills.

Music & Movement: Simple songs and rhymes, such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,' allow children to follow along, helping them develop listening comprehension. Teachers can also use songs with hand gestures (e.g., 'Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes') to enhance comprehension while reinforcing body awareness.

Promoting Social Interaction for Language Development

Social interaction is one of the most effective ways to promote language development. The classroom environment should support collaborative activities and peer interactions that provide ample opportunities for children to practice and refine their language skills.



Social Studies: In social studies, group activities such as role-playing different cultural events or historical scenarios encourage children to work together, share ideas, and discuss various perspectives. These peer-to-peer conversations promote language development through negotiation, explanation, and dialogue.

Art: Group art projects, such as creating a large mural or making a collage together, provide opportunities for children to talk with one another about what they are doing. For example, one child might say, 'Can I help you glue the paper?' This promotes both cooperation and language development.

Music & Movement: Music activities that involve following verbal cues ('Clap your hands!' or 'Jump high!') encourage peer-to-peer interaction. During group dancing or singing, children communicate with each other through actions and words, helping them practice social and language skills.

Fostering Early Literacy Skills Through Environmental Design

A classroom environment that supports early literacy plays a crucial role in language development. The layout, materials, and activities must promote both oral and written language skills, laying the foundation for future reading and writing abilities.



Social Studies: Simple books about community helpers (e.g., firemen, doctors, or teachers) introduce new vocabulary related to

jobs and roles in society. Preschoolers can engage in activities like drawing their own version of a firefighter or doctor, further reinforcing vocabulary.

Art: Art activities that involve labeling objects or creating visual stories encourage early literacy skills. Children can practice writing their names, labeling their artwork, or creating short descriptions of their projects, which supports both reading and writing development.

Music & Movement: Singing songs with repetitive verses, like 'The Wheels on the Bus,' teaches preschoolers about structure and rhyme, which are crucial for literacy. These activities also help children develop sound recognition and the ability to follow along with text, even before they can read.

Outdoor Play and Language Development

Outdoor play is not only essential for physical development but also provides valuable opportunities for language learning through interaction with the environment and peers.



Social Studies: On nature walks or during outdoor explorations, teachers can introduce children to new words by pointing out different features in nature, such as 'tree,' 'bird,' 'rock,' and 'stream.' Children can be encouraged to ask questions and share what they see.

Art: Outdoor art activities like chalk drawing on sidewalks or using leaves to create pictures encourage children to describe their artistic process. These activities also expand vocabulary related to colors, shapes, and nature.

Music & Movement: Outdoor activities such as singing 'The Ants Go Marching' while marching around help children associate physical movement with language. These types of activities can also help children practice counting and following directions.

Teachers engage in conversations with children that support their understanding of themselves and others. These interactions are crucial for language development as they provide children with models of effective communication and opportunities to practice their language skills.

Visual Representation of Language Development in Classroom Areas

Language Development in Classroom Areas

Classroom Area	Encouraging Verbal Communication and Language Play	Supporting Vocabulary Development Through Materials and Interactions	Encouraging Listening and Comprehension Skills	Promoting Social Interaction for Language Development	Fostering Early Literacy Skills Through Environmental Design
Social Studies	Role-play activities, such as pretending to be animals or people from different parts of the world	Use picture books and toys that represent different cultures and communities	Listen to stories or discussions about various cultures, countries, or communities	Group activities such as role-playing different cultural events or historical scenarios	Simple books about community helpers introduce new vocabulary
Art	Describe what they are drawing or painting	Label materials clearly, helping children connect spoken words to objects	Group art projects with questions from the teacher	Group art projects like creating a large mural or making a collage together	Labeling objects or creating visual stories in art activities
Music & Movement	Sing simple songs or chants that involve hand motions	Music activities with simple instruments like tambourines or maracas	Simple songs and rhymes that allow children to follow along	Music activities that involve following verbal cues	Singing songs with repetitive verses, teaching structure and rhyme
Outdoor Play	Engage in nature walks or outdoor explorations	Introduce new words by pointing out different features in nature	Encourage children to ask questions and share what they see	Outdoor activities that involve physical movement and language	Outdoor activities that help children practice counting and following directions

The power of a well-planned environment and intentional teacher-child interactions can be best understood through real-life examples. The following vignettes illustrate how language development is naturally embedded in daily routines, play, and spontaneous conversations across a variety of classroom settings. These moments highlight the ways in which teachers use the environment, materials, and their own guidance to support and extend children's communication skills.

Vignette: Talking, Listening, and Learnig: Language in Every Moment of a Preschool Day

Young children learn in everyday moments of play and interaction. A child who arrives in the classroom and sees his name written on a cubby where he deposits what he brought from home is learning. That learning is amplified when he walks to a nearby metal tray (labeled with the words "Home" and "School") and moves the magnet attached to his photo from the

"Home" side of the frame to the "School" side. The learning continues when he stops to write his version of his name in the sign-in binder, located near a ring of cards with a child's name and photo printed on each. In this area, he can observe the accompanying family member sign him in as well.

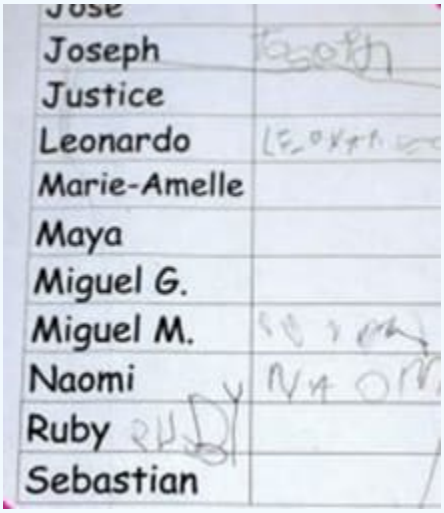


Figure 3.3.1: An example page from a sign-in binder.[1]

Arrival: A child arrives in the classroom and immediately sees his name written on a cubby where he deposits what he brought from home. This simple act of recognizing his name is an early literacy skill. The learning is amplified when he walks to a nearby metal tray labeled with the words "Home" and "School" and moves the magnet attached to his photo from the "Home" side of the frame to the "School" side. This activity not only reinforces word recognition but also helps him understand the concept of transitioning between home and school. Next, he stops to write his version of his name in the sign-in binder, located near a ring of cards with a child's name and photo printed on each. In this area, he can observe the accompanying family member sign him in as well. This practice helps him develop writing skills and understand the importance of written communication.

Morning Activities and Social Interaction: A bit later, that same child is learning when he describes to the teacher his frustration that his "favorite tricycle is still being used by another child." The teacher suggests what he might say to encourage the other child to explore how the two of them might cooperate. This interaction teaches him problem-solving skills and effective communication strategies. After that conversation, his learning continues as he ventures into the block area and takes on the challenge of turning a container of blocks and boxes into a gas station. Here, he negotiates varying roles in pretend play with his friends, which enhances his social and language skills through collaborative play.

Lunch and Care Routines: At lunch, when he pours milk into his glass using a small measuring cup, he is not only practicing measurement and fine motor skills, but also hearing and using language like "full," "empty," "pour," and "more." These moments build vocabulary and reinforce concepts through everyday routines.

Indoor Play: In the dramatic play area, two preschoolers put on aprons and pretend to cook. One child says, *"I'm making soup for the baby!"* while another responds, *"Let's put it in the oven!"* These exchanges encourage expressive language, storytelling, and the use of sequence words like *first*, *then*, and *next*. Teachers scaffold language by asking open-ended questions such as, *"What ingredients are in your soup?"* or *"Who else will eat with us?"*—inviting children to expand their vocabulary and practice conversation skills.

Nearby, a child builds with blocks and says, *"This is a tall tower."* A teacher joins and comments, *"Your tower is tall and strong. What will you build next?"* This interaction introduces descriptive language and spatial terms like *next to*, *on top*, and *beside*.

Outdoor Play: On the playground, children chase bubbles blown by a teacher. As they pop them, they shout, *"Pop!"* and *"Look, a big one!"* Teachers name actions (*float*, *chase*, *pop*) and describe what they see (*"That bubble went high into the sky!"*) to model rich vocabulary and support language through movement and observation.

At the sandbox, children use shovels and molds to build castles. One says, *"I need more sand!"* and another replies, *"I have a bucket!"* These interactions promote social language and problem-solving communication. A teacher might extend the experience by introducing new words: *"That's a moat. A moat goes around the castle to keep it safe."*

Each opportunity, in this example, reflects thoughtful, intentional curriculum planning designed to support language development throughout the day.

Intentional Curriculum Planning:

Teachers' early childhood curriculum plans intentionally support **language development** by designing both the physical and social environments as contexts for learning. In the physical space, teachers decide what, when, and how materials and furnishings are made available to children to foster meaningful communication. For example, the sign-in binder and labeled trays are strategically placed to encourage **early literacy, name recognition, and functional language use** as children begin to understand that words convey meaning.

The social environment is equally important. Teachers plan for roles, responsibilities, and guidance during routines and spontaneous interactions, using each moment as an opportunity for children to **hear, practice, and expand language**. For instance, when a teacher helps a child navigate a conflict over a tricycle, she models how to express feelings, negotiate, and problem-solve with words—essential components of **social language and emotional expression**.

A broad definition of curriculum includes the following components, all of which contribute to rich language development:

- **Play spaces designed as environments for learning**: In the block area, children engage in pretend play, using expressive language to narrate stories, assign roles, and describe structures, strengthening both receptive and expressive language.
- **Care routines that invite children's active participation**: Activities like pouring milk at lunch offer chances to learn vocabulary related to everyday experiences (*"pour," "full," "more"*) and to follow verbal directions.
- **Intentional interactions and conversations with children**: These build understanding of self and others while supporting sentence structure, new vocabulary, and the rhythm of conversation.

Through thoughtful planning, early childhood teachers embed language-rich experiences into every part of the day, ensuring that children develop strong communication skills in authentic, meaningful ways.

Vignette: Sounds, Signs, and Smiles: Language Learning in an Infant and Toddler Classroom

As with preschoolers, infants and toddlers develop language through everyday interactions, responsive caregiving, and intentional environments. Let's follow a few children through a day in a thoughtfully prepared infant-toddler classroom to see how caregivers support early communication and language development.

Arrival and Connection: As a caregiver gently greets a toddler named Luca and his family at the door, she says, *"Good morning, Luca! You brought your blanket today—let's tuck it in your cubby."* Luca beams and points to his photo above the cubby. This moment builds name recognition and the connection between spoken words and meaningful objects.

Nearby, an infant named Amara is snuggled in her caregiver's arms as the caregiver softly narrates, *"We're taking off your coat. One sleeve, two sleeves... All done!"* These simple, warm exchanges provide repeated exposure to language and help infants begin to associate words with actions and routines.

Morning Exploration and Play: During playtime, toddlers gather around a soft basket of books with real photos of babies and families. A toddler flips through the pages and points to a baby, exclaiming, *"Baby cry!"* A caregiver responds, *"Yes, the baby is crying. Maybe the baby is hungry?"* This back-and-forth helps toddlers connect words with emotions and ideas.

On the floor, a caregiver plays with Amara using soft stacking rings. She says, *"Red ring... now blue ring... up, up!"* Amara babbles and waves her arms as the caregiver pauses, smiles, and mirrors her sounds. These early vocal turn-takes are the foundations of conversation.

Care Routines as Language Opportunities: During a diaper change, a caregiver makes eye contact with an infant and gently says, *"Let's change your diaper. Off go the pants. Now we wipe... All clean!"* Using a calm voice and simple, repeated language during routines helps infants associate words with comforting, predictable experiences.

Meanwhile, a caregiver prepares toddlers for snack by singing a simple clean-up song:
"Time to tidy up, put the toys away..."
Toddlers join in with gestures and repeated words, strengthening memory, rhythm, and understanding of routine-based vocabulary.

Shared Moments and Social Language: Later, two toddlers notice each other's lunch containers. One says, *"Banana!"* and the other replies, *"Me too!"* A caregiver supports the moment by narrating: *"You both have bananas. You noticed that your lunches are the same!"* These shared observations are supported by the adult's intentional use of descriptive language.

Infants also engage socially through facial expressions, cooing, and gestures. A caregiver mimics a baby's babble with a playful tone and smiles, waiting for the baby to respond. This imitation helps babies learn the pattern of conversation before they can speak.

Intentional Language-Rich Environments: In this classroom, the learning environment is carefully planned to support early communication:

- **Visual cues and photo labels** help toddlers build word associations.
- **Songs and sign language** are woven into daily routines to give children multiple ways to understand and express themselves.
- **Caregivers respond warmly and consistently** to gestures, vocalizations, and words, helping even the youngest children feel heard and understood.

Every diaper change, mealtime, book shared, or game of peek-a-boo is a chance to build early language skills in a responsive, nurturing environment designed with the youngest learners in mind.

Conclusion

The classroom environment serves as an active facilitator in children's language development. Thoughtfully designed by educators, it provides rich, meaningful experiences that nurture both receptive and expressive language skills. Throughout the day, every interaction and activity—whether structured or spontaneous—becomes an opportunity for communication and learning. These everyday moments of play and engagement are the foundation of early childhood education, supporting cognitive growth and fostering the development of competent, confident communicators. In turn, this prepares children for future literacy and long-term academic success.

References

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3.4: How the Environment Supports Development in Approaches to Learning

Introduction

The Approaches to Learning domain is a critical area of development in the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). This domain emphasizes the way children engage with the learning process, including how they approach tasks, interact with others, and navigate their emotions. The WMELS highlights key areas like curiosity, persistence, problem-solving, social competence, and self-regulation. The classroom environment and creative arts materials play pivotal roles in supporting children's approaches to learning by providing opportunities for exploration, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and engagement in learning activities.

The Environment as the "Third Teacher"

When viewing the environment as the "third teacher," the classroom environment should not only support physical development but also nurture emotional, cognitive, and social growth, aligning with the WMELS in the Approaches to Learning domain. The WMELS emphasizes the importance of creating an environment where children develop the skills needed for curiosity, persistence, problem-solving, social competence, and self-regulation.

The environment, when designed intentionally, fosters curiosity, engagement, and problem-solving. For example, open-ended materials like blocks or art supplies invite children to explore and experiment, fostering their creativity and critical thinking. Similarly, a well-arranged space with clearly defined areas for different activities, such as dramatic play or a reading nook, supports self-regulation, social competence, and emotional development—key aspects outlined in the WMELS.

The "third teacher" concept suggests that the physical space itself plays an active role in guiding and supporting children's learning experiences. A well-structured classroom with sensory-rich areas, such as nature exploration corners or calming spaces, encourages emotional expression, problem-solving, and cooperative learning, as outlined in WMELS.

Engagement and Persistence

According to the WMELS, engagement and persistence are essential for young children's learning. A well-designed classroom environment encourages children to engage in activities that require persistence and effort. Materials and activities that promote curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving foster this type of engagement. Whether children are exploring a new concept in a small group or working independently on a task, the environment must provide opportunities that encourage them to stick with challenges and find solutions.



Social Studies: Social studies activities can promote engagement by encouraging children to explore different cultural perspectives. For example, children might engage in role-playing activities where they adopt the roles of community helpers, like firefighters or doctors, to solve problems or provide help in pretend scenarios, thereby promoting perseverance in completing tasks.

Art: Art activities such as creating collages, painting, or constructing with blocks encourage persistence. For instance, a child might work on a long-term project, such as a mural, where they need to plan, revisit, and adapt their ideas over time, building both creativity and perseverance.

Music & Movement: Music activities where children have to learn a new rhythm or follow a specific song pattern can also support persistence. Songs that involve repetitive patterns or actions encourage children to stay focused and persist until they master the rhythm or movement sequence. This persistence is a key aspect of the WMELS Approaches to Learning domain.

Curiosity and Initiative

Curiosity and initiative are foundational elements in the WMELS Approaches to Learning domain. Curiosity is a natural trait in young children, and the classroom environment must support and nurture this intrinsic desire to explore and ask questions. Curiosity can be fostered by providing open-ended materials, new challenges, and diverse learning experiences that encourage children to take initiative and engage in their learning process.



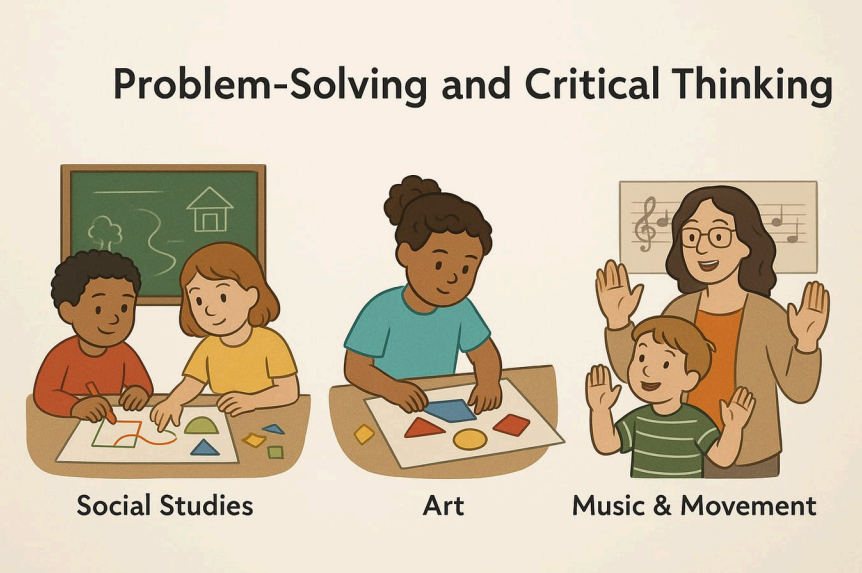
Social Studies: Children's curiosity can be sparked through simple stories and activities about different places, people, and cultures. For example, a classroom set up with cultural artifacts and storybooks that highlight different ways of life encourages children to ask questions and explore various aspects of the world around them.

Art: Art provides numerous opportunities for children to exercise their curiosity. Materials such as clay, paint, or loose parts allow children to explore texture, color, shape, and design, asking questions like "What happens if I mix these colors?" or "How can I use this material to make something new?" These explorations encourage creativity and initiative, fostering curiosity, a key component of the WMELS domain.

Music & Movement: Music and movement activities encourage children to explore sound and motion. For example, using instruments like tambourines or maracas, children are encouraged to initiate their own sounds and rhythms. They might also experiment with how their bodies can move to different types of music, fostering their curiosity about sound, movement, and expression.

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

The classroom environment plays a crucial role in fostering problem-solving and critical thinking, as emphasized in the WMELS Approaches to Learning domain. A well-structured classroom environment fosters problem-solving and critical thinking by offering opportunities for children to engage in activities that challenge their thinking. By providing situations where children must find solutions, either independently or with peers, the environment encourages cognitive development.



Social Studies: Social studies activities, such as creating a simple map of the classroom or discussing community roles, encourage critical thinking. Children might work together to solve problems, such as deciding where to place certain objects in a play town setup or what resources are needed in a pretend community.

Art: Art challenges children to think critically as they decide how to use materials. For example, they may work on a project that requires figuring out how to connect different shapes or colors to complete a picture or sculpture. These activities encourage them to think through steps and make decisions.

Music & Movement: Music and movement activities that involve pattern recognition or following complex sequences of movements challenge children's problem-solving skills. For example, a simple dance routine or rhythm pattern that children must memorize and perform tests their memory and critical thinking abilities.

Social Competence and Self-Regulation

The classroom environment should also support children in developing social competence and self-regulation skills, both of which are key components of the WMELS Approaches to Learning domain. These competencies are crucial for children to navigate social interactions, work cooperatively with peers, and manage their emotions effectively.



Social Studies: Social studies activities that focus on relationships, such as simple role-playing scenarios, can help children learn how to express empathy, share, and communicate with others. For example, acting out scenarios like a family dinner or a community event can teach children about the roles they play in social situations and how to navigate them.

Art: Art activities like collaborative projects (e.g., creating a large mural) foster teamwork and communication skills. Sharing materials, listening to others' ideas, and contributing to a group effort help children practice self-regulation and develop social competence.

Music & Movement: Movement games such as "freeze dance" or "follow the leader" provide opportunities for children to practice self-regulation. These activities involve children following rules, taking turns, and listening to others, all of which support the development of social competence.

Visual Representation of Approaches to Learning in Classroom Areas

Approaches to Learning in Classroom Areas

Classroom Area	Engagement and Persistence	Curiosity and Initiative	Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	Social Competence and Self-Regulation
Social Studies	Role-playing activities where they adopt the roles of community helpers	Stories and activities about different places, people, and cultures	Creating a simple map of the classroom or discussing community roles	Role-playing scenarios like a family dinner or a community event
Art	Creating collages, painting, or constructing with blocks	Exploring texture, color, shape, and design with materials like clay, paint, or loose parts	Figuring out how to connect different shapes or colors in art projects	Collaborative projects like creating a large mural
Music & Movement	Learning a new rhythm or following a specific song pattern	Using instruments like tambourines or maracas to explore sound and motion	Following complex sequences of movements in dance routines or rhythm patterns	Movement games such as "freeze dance" or "follow the leader"
Outdoor Play	Engaging in nature walks or outdoor explorations	Exploring natural materials and asking questions about their surroundings	Solving problems during outdoor play activities	Cooperative play and sharing during outdoor activities

Conclusion

The classroom environment plays an essential role in supporting children's approaches to learning, including fostering curiosity, engagement, problem-solving, social competence, and self-regulation, all key aspects outlined in the WMELS. By providing rich learning opportunities in the areas of social studies, art, and music & movement, educators can create a space that nurtures all aspects of a child's learning, helping them grow as competent, confident, and curious individuals.

References

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[2] The California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2, by the California Department of Education, is used with permission.

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3.5: How the Classroom Environment Supports Cognitive Development

Learning Objectives

After reading this section of the chapter, students will be able to:

- Identify how the classroom environment supports cognitive development.

Introduction

Cognitive development is a crucial domain in the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), focusing on how children think, explore, and understand the world. A well-designed classroom environment provides rich learning opportunities to support cognitive development through various activities that stimulate curiosity, problem-solving, memory, attention, and critical thinking. This document explores how the environment supports cognitive development, with examples from social studies, art, music, and movement for children from birth to 5.

The Environment as the "Third Teacher"

Viewing the environment as the 'third teacher,' the classroom environment serves as a powerful tool for supporting development across multiple domains, including physical, social-emotional, language, and communication, as well as approaches to learning. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in fostering cognitive development. By offering carefully selected materials and thoughtfully designed spaces, the environment encourages exploration and discovery. It actively engages children with new ideas, materials, and challenges, promoting curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills that are essential for cognitive growth.

Designing Play Spaces



Teacher's Role in Designing Play Spaces

Teachers act as "stage managers," selecting toys, furnishings, and materials that invite children to explore, experiment, and solve problems. They thoughtfully organize materials to support self-initiated exploration, investigation, and invention of ideas.

- **Selection of Materials**: Teachers carefully choose materials that are open-ended and versatile, allowing children to use them in multiple ways. For example, blocks can be used to build structures, create patterns, or even as props in imaginative play. This variety encourages children to think creatively and solve problems.
- **Organization of Space**: The way materials are organized can significantly impact children's engagement. Teachers might arrange materials in accessible, clearly labeled bins to promote independence and encourage children to explore different options. This organization helps children develop planning and decision-making skills.
- **Facilitation of Play**: Teachers observe children's interactions with materials and provide subtle guidance to extend their thinking. For instance, if a child is building a tower with blocks, the teacher might ask questions like, "How tall can you make it before it falls?" or "What happens if you use different shapes?" These prompts encourage deeper exploration and problem-solving.

Rich Learning Environments

Environments with a variety of activities enhance children's learning in domains such as science, math, and history-social science. Dance, music, and drama introduce children to the arts and help them regulate behavior and take the perspective of others.

- **Science and Math**: Activities like sorting objects by size, shape, or color, or experimenting with water and sand, help children develop foundational concepts in science and math. These activities promote critical thinking and problem-solving as children make observations, ask questions, and test hypotheses.
- **History-Social Science**: Role-playing different community roles or exploring cultural artifacts helps children understand social structures and develop empathy. For example, pretending to be a doctor or a firefighter allows children to explore societal roles and responsibilities, fostering social competence and self-regulation.
- **Arts Integration**: Dance, music, and drama activities introduce children to the arts and help them express themselves creatively. These activities also support cognitive development by encouraging children to follow sequences, remember patterns, and regulate their behavior. For instance, learning a dance routine requires children to remember steps and coordinate movements, which enhances memory and attention.

Play Spaces as Laboratories

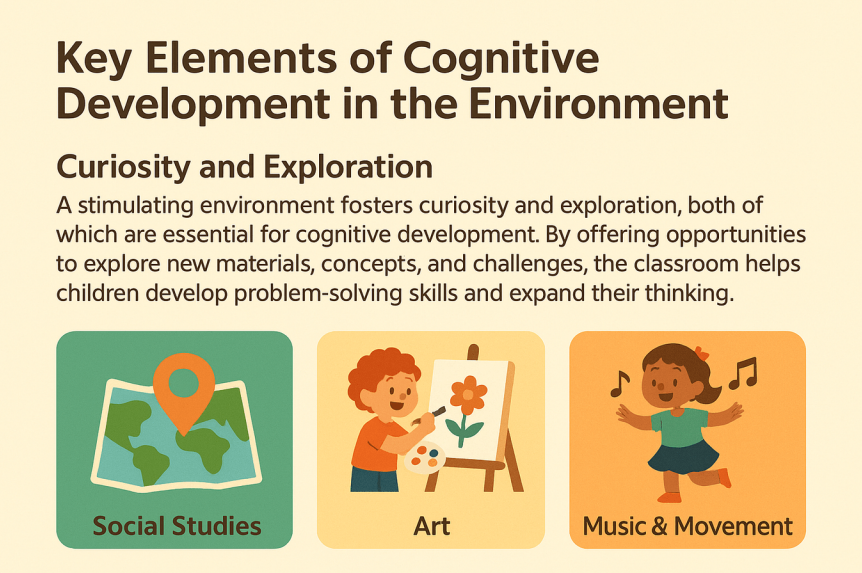
Play spaces are seen as children's laboratories for learning, where they explore, experiment, and solve problems. Materials and furnishings in play spaces invite children to figure out what the world is like and how it works.

- **Exploration and Experimentation**: Play spaces equipped with diverse materials like magnifying glasses, measuring tapes, and building blocks encourage children to explore and experiment. These tools help children develop scientific thinking as they make observations, measure, and test their ideas.
- **Problem-Solving**: Play spaces designed with challenges, such as puzzles or construction sets, promote problem-solving skills. Children learn to approach problems methodically, test different solutions, and persist until they find a resolution. This process enhances their critical thinking and resilience.
- **Conceptual Understanding**: By interacting with materials in play spaces, children construct knowledge about the world. For example, playing with water and sand helps children understand concepts like volume, weight, and texture. These hands-on experiences are crucial for cognitive development as they allow children to apply their learning in practical ways.

Key Elements of Cognitive Development in the Environment

Curiosity and Exploration

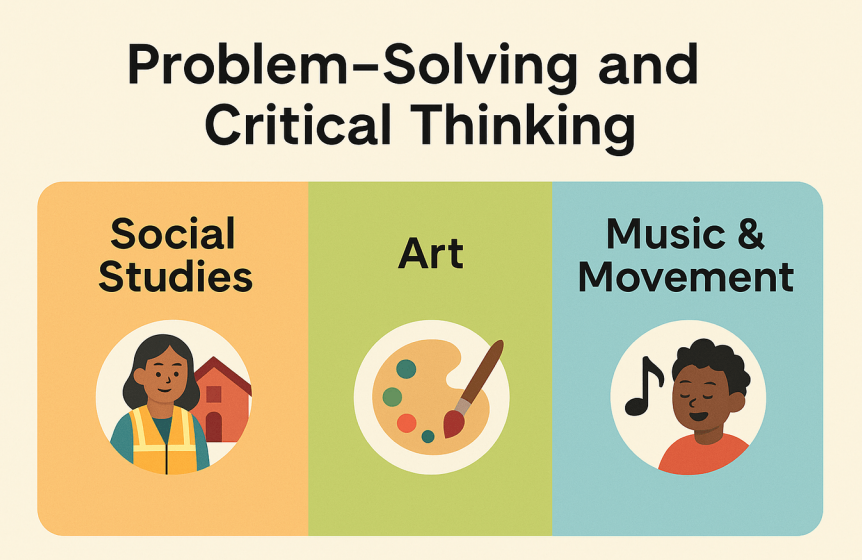
A stimulating environment fosters curiosity and exploration, both of which are essential for cognitive development. By offering opportunities to explore new materials, concepts, and challenges, the classroom helps children develop problem-solving skills and expand their thinking.



- **Social Studies**: Activities such as examining simple maps or exploring different cultures encourage children to ask questions about the world around them. For example, children might engage in role-playing where they act out different community roles like a baker or a firefighter, or explore a new country's customs through pretend play, sparking curiosity about how people live and think in various parts of the world.
- **Art**: Art activities provide ample opportunities for cognitive development as children experiment with shapes, colors, and textures. For instance, creating a collage using various materials like fabric, paper, and natural items invites children to think critically about what materials to use, how to connect them, and how to express their ideas. These tasks also promote creativity and planning skills.
- **Music & Movement**: Music and movement activities support cognitive development by encouraging children to explore patterns, rhythm, and cause-and-effect relationships. For example, singing songs with repetitive patterns or clapping to a rhythm helps children understand sequencing and memory, which are critical thinking skills.

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

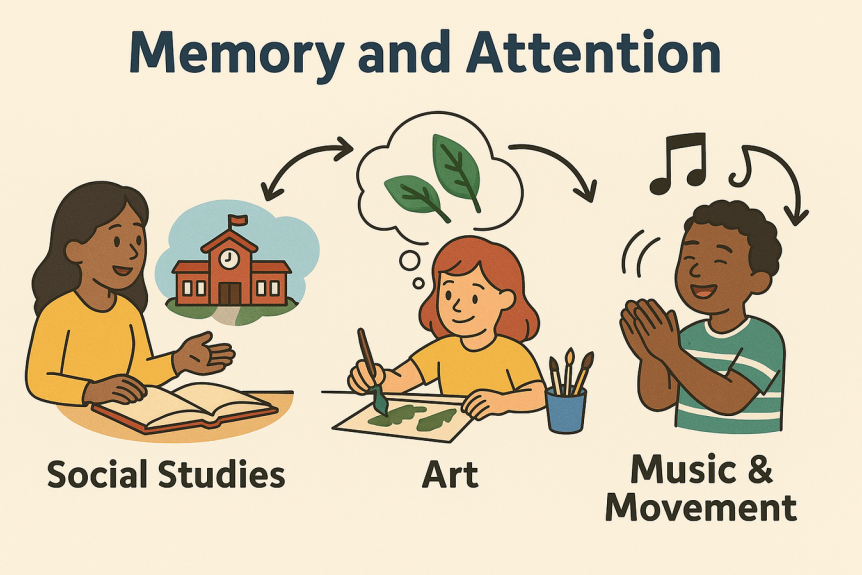
Cognitive development is supported when children are presented with opportunities to solve problems and think critically. An environment rich in problem-solving activities encourages children to engage in cognitive challenges that require them to think deeply, make decisions, and explore different solutions.



- **Social Studies**: In social studies, activities like sorting pictures of community helpers or solving simple problems related to community building can challenge children's ability to think critically. For example, children might work together to create a model of a community using blocks, deciding where various structures (like a school or hospital) should go and discussing how each element fits into the community. These types of activities require children to think logically and collaboratively.
- **Art**: Art activities encourage critical thinking, as children decide how to approach a project, select materials, and figure out how to express their ideas. For example, when children are asked to draw a picture of their favorite animal, they must think about how to represent it with shapes and colors, which encourages planning and decision-making.
- **Music & Movement**: Music and movement activities foster problem-solving by encouraging children to follow sequences and patterns. For example, a musical activity where children must repeat a sequence of clapping or tapping teaches them about pattern recognition and sequencing, which are foundational cognitive skills.

Memory and Attention

The environment plays a vital role in helping children develop memory and attention, two key components of cognitive development. Structured routines and activities that require children to recall information, follow instructions, or focus on a task for a certain period help to strengthen these skills.



- **Social Studies**: Memory and attention are developed when children engage in activities like storytelling or listening to cultural narratives. For example, after listening to a story about a community event, children might be asked to recall specific details or discuss the moral of the story. This exercise improves their attention to detail and memory.
- **Art**: Art projects that involve multiple steps encourage children to remember and follow instructions. For instance, when creating a nature print by placing leaves on paper and painting over them, children must remember the steps and focus on the process, which helps develop both memory and attention.
- **Music & Movement**: Songs and games that require children to remember sequences (such as 'Simon Says') or recall certain motions to match the music help children practice attention and memory. These activities engage children's ability to focus and remember patterns, supporting their cognitive growth.

Social Competence and Self-Regulation

Social competence and self-regulation are closely linked to cognitive development. The classroom environment can support these skills by providing structured and unstructured opportunities for children to practice interacting with others, solving social dilemmas, and managing their emotions.



- **Social Studies**: Social studies activities, such as working together in groups to solve problems or participating in role-play scenarios, help children develop social competence and self-regulation. For example, children can engage in a community-building exercise where they must cooperate, take turns, and regulate their emotions when conflicts arise.
- **Art**: Art activities can help children regulate their emotions and interact socially. For example, a group project where children work together to create a mural requires cooperation, patience, and self-regulation as they decide on the design, share materials, and work together.
- **Music & Movement**: Music and movement activities, such as playing a game with rhythm instruments or dancing in a circle, foster both cognitive and social development. As children follow the rules of the game, take turns, and cooperate with peers, they practice both self-regulation and social competence.

Visual Representation of Cognitive Development in Classroom Areas

Cognitive Development in Classroom Areas

Classroom Area	Curiosity and Exploration	Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	Memory and Attention	Social Competence and Self-Regulation
Social Studies	Examining simple maps, exploring different cultures, and role-playing community roles	Sorting pictures of community helpers, solving simple community-building problems	Story-telling, listening to cultural narratives, recalling details	Working together in groups, participating in role-play scenarios
Art	Experimenting with shapes, colors, and textures in art projects	Deciding how to approach art projects, selecting materials, and expressing ideas	Art projects with multiple steps, remembering and following instructions	Collaborative art projects, like creating a mural

Classroom Area	Curiosity and Exploration	Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	Memory and Attention	Social Competence and Self-Regulation
Music & Movement	Exploring patterns, rhythm, and cause-and-effect relationships in music activities	Following sequences and patterns in music and movement activities	Songs and games that require remembering sequences or motions	Playing games with rhythm instruments, dancing in a circle

Conclusion

The classroom environment plays a key role in supporting cognitive development by providing opportunities for curiosity, problem-solving, critical thinking, memory, attention, social competence, and self-regulation. By incorporating activities from social studies, art, and music & movement, educators can create a learning environment that encourages cognitive growth, helping children become thoughtful, engaged, and self-regulated learners.

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4: SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING EXPERIENCES

4.1: National Council of Social Studies Framework

4.2: Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Learning Experiences

4.3: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Learning Experiences

4.4: Incorporate Effective Transitions into Social Studies Learning Experiences

4.5: Incorporate the WMELS Framework

4.6: Reflect the Teaching Cycle

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4.1: National Council of Social Studies Framework

Introduction

Think back to your school days. Did you enjoy social studies? Why or why not? When you think of social studies, what comes to mind? Do you recall learning about history, geography, or maybe the roles people play in society? These early lessons in social studies are more than just facts—they help us understand the world around us and our place within it.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is a professional organization that sets standards for social studies education. It aims to promote the development of social studies curricula that engage students in meaningful and critical thinking about the world. These standards guide educators to teach social studies in a way that is relevant, engaging, and developmentally appropriate for all students, from early childhood through high school.

In early childhood, the NCSS encourages an approach that builds a foundation for later learning by focusing on key concepts that young children can relate to and explore in a hands-on, interactive way. The NCSS had 10 themes for Social Studies.

NCSS Social Studies Themes in Early Childhood



Figure 4.1.1: Social Studies Standards

Next, we will explore each of the ten NCSS themes for social studies. Below is a summary explaining what each theme covers and how they are adapted to be developmentally appropriate (DAP) for young learners.

1. Culture

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

Focuses on helping children explore their own identity and recognize cultural diversity within their community. Activities might include exploring different customs, traditions, and family structures, using simple language and storytelling to build cultural awareness.



Figure 4.1.2: What is Culture?

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** During playtime, caregivers can introduce soft dolls or plush toys representing various cultural backgrounds. The caregiver might sing lullabies in different languages or use simple greetings in multiple languages (e.g., "Hello," "Bonjour," "Hola") to expose infants to diverse sounds and rhythms.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can engage in simple activities such as listening to songs or reading books representing different cultures. For example, they can watch short videos or hear stories about celebrations like Diwali, Hanukkah, or Lunar New Year. Children might also experience diverse foods or sensory activities (e.g., sand play, textile exploration).
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can participate in "All About Me" activities, where they learn about their own culture as well as the cultures of their peers. They could share traditions, dress in culturally significant clothing, or engage in art projects that explore different cultural symbols (e.g., designing flags, making masks, or painting culturally important animals).

2. Time, Continuity, and Change

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

Children are introduced to basic concepts of time, such as "yesterday," "today," and "tomorrow." Activities like talking about daily routines, discussing events that happen in a sequence (e.g., morning to evening), and introducing simple historical figures or family stories help children develop an understanding of the past and present.





Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

- **Infants**: Caregivers can model daily routines (e.g., feeding, napping, playing) and use simple phrases to help infants understand sequence and time, like “After we eat, we take a nap.”
- **Toddlers**: Toddlers can sort pictures or toys by time of day (e.g., morning activities like brushing teeth and evening activities like getting ready for bed). Songs about time and routines can help toddlers understand concepts like "morning" and "night."
- **Preschoolers**: Preschoolers can create a simple "Today’s Schedule" chart with pictures representing different parts of the day (e.g., breakfast, story time, nap time). They can engage in role-playing activities where they act out sequences of events (e.g., pretending to wake up, have breakfast, go to school). Preschoolers might also bring in pictures of themselves to share and discuss how they have grown and changed from when they were a baby to now.

3. People, Places, and Environments

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

This theme focuses on familiarizing children with their immediate surroundings—home, school, and neighborhood—and how they interact with them. Simple map activities, discussions about places, and identifying community helpers support children in understanding their environment.



Figure 4.1.3: Preschool children at a fire station (OpenAI).

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants explore their environment through sensory play (e.g., touching different textures of cloth or toys). Caregivers can name objects and people, reinforcing the child's growing understanding of their surroundings.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can explore their environment by engaging in pretend play (e.g., mimicking the role of a firefighter or police officer). Simple map puzzles or walking around the school grounds while identifying important locations (e.g., “This is the playground”) help toddlers understand their space.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can create simple maps of their classroom or home, and engage in discussions about their neighborhood and the places they go (e.g., park, store, library). They might role-play different community helper roles or take field trips to local places (e.g., a fire station or a grocery store).

4. Individual Development and Identity

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

Emphasizes helping children develop a sense of self, including their likes, dislikes, and how they are similar to or different from others. Activities such as "All About Me" projects, discussing personal interests, and recognizing similarities and differences among peers promote self-awareness and identity development.



Figure 4.1.4: A young girl drawing a self-portrait in a preschool classroom (OpenAI)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- Infants: Caregivers can mirror infant expressions, such as smiling or making different sounds, to help infants begin to understand themselves. “Mirror play” allows infants to explore their reflection, fostering early self-awareness.
- Toddlers: Toddlers can engage in simple "All About Me" activities like making handprint art or listening to stories about children from different backgrounds. They may also learn their own name, the names of family members, and identify their favorite colors or foods.
- Preschoolers: Preschoolers can create personal identity collages with pictures or drawings representing their favorite things (e.g., food, pets, family). Activities like "My Family Tree" or “All About Me” books help children explore their own identity and family roles.

5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

This theme encourages children to learn about the roles of people around them, such as family members, teachers, and community helpers. Simple discussions and activities like role-playing and identifying various group roles help children understand relationships within groups.



Figure 4.1.5: Children learning to help. (Laundry, Plants)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants learn through observation and interactions with caregivers and family members. Caregivers can introduce familiar faces and names, providing opportunities for infants to bond with key figures in their environment.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can engage in pretend play, mimicking roles of family members, teachers, and community helpers (e.g., pretending to cook like Mom or Dad). They can also help set the table or perform small tasks that support family routines.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can learn about different community helpers (e.g., mail carriers, doctors) by reading books or acting out roles. They might also take field trips or engage in projects that highlight the importance of various group members.
- **Infants:** Infants learn through observation and interactions with caregivers and family members. Caregivers can introduce familiar faces and names, providing opportunities for infants to bond with key figures in their environment.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can engage in pretend play, mimicking roles of family members, teachers, and community helpers (e.g., pretending to cook like Mom or Dad). They can also help set the table or perform small tasks that support family routines.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can learn about different community helpers (e.g., mail carriers, doctors) by reading books or acting out roles. They might also take field trips or engage in projects that highlight the importance of various group members.

6. Power, Authority, and Governance

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

For young children, this theme focuses on understanding basic concepts of fairness, rules, and cooperation. Discussions about taking turns, sharing, and the importance of rules within a classroom or home setting help children build foundational

understandings of social order and governance.



Figure 4.1.6: Child learning about voting (Kids Voting Durham)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants learn through caregivers modeling turn-taking during playtime (e.g., sharing toys or waiting for their turn to play).
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can practice basic rules like "take turns," "say please and thank you," and "clean up." Simple group games (e.g., "Simon Says") can reinforce the idea of following rules.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can role-play being a "helper" in the classroom, taking turns with leadership tasks. They can also engage in discussions about rules and fairness, like deciding together on classroom expectations or creating a "classroom promise."

7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

Children are introduced to basic economic concepts like sharing, trading, and the idea of needs and wants. Simple activities like sorting, using play money, or discussing where things come from (e.g., food, toys) help children understand how people exchange goods and services.



Figure 4.1.7: Toddlers Playing Store (Busy Toddler)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants explore different textures and objects, with caregivers talking about where things come from (e.g., "This is your soft bear. It was made in a factory").
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can participate in simple activities like “grocery shopping” using play money or exchange toys with friends to practice the idea of trading.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can set up a pretend store with items like fruits and vegetables, using play money to "purchase" goods. Teachers can introduce the idea of wants (e.g., toys) and needs (e.g., food) through storybooks.

8. Science, Technology, and Society

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

This theme can be explored through hands-on experiences that integrate social studies with science and technology. Activities like using tools to explore the environment or learning about how technology impacts daily life allow children to begin understanding the relationship between society and technological advancements.



Figure 4.1.8: Children playing with science-related toys (Rayito Schools, Stemfinity)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants can explore cause and effect through simple toys that light up or make noise. Caregivers can use everyday technology (e.g., light switches, phones) to introduce basic technology concepts.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can engage in sensory exploration with tools like magnifying glasses or simple machines (e.g., levers, pulleys) to understand how things work. They can also explore technology in the form of interactive apps or videos.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can participate in experiments to see how objects interact with water, air, or light. They can also explore how technology is used in their daily lives, such as observing how a toaster or blender works.

9. Global Connections

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

Early childhood education introduces global awareness in a simplified, relatable way, such as discussing different cultures, foods, or animals from around the world. This can include stories, music, and art that show the diversity of the world.





Figure 4.1.9: Children learning about other music and geography (Playmatters, A Learning Bee Academy)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Caregivers can expose infants to simple, colorful images of animals from different countries or play soothing music from various cultures.
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can engage in activities like cooking or tasting foods from different countries, listening to music, or creating art from different cultural traditions.
- Preschoolers: Preschoolers can participate in a "World Tour" by exploring different countries through stories, songs, and crafts. They can learn basic greetings in various languages or celebrate holidays from other cultures.

10. Civic Ideals and Practices

General Adaptation for Early Childhood:

In early childhood, this theme is focused on teaching children about being respectful, kind, and cooperative members of their community. Activities such as group problem-solving, collaborative games, and discussions about rights and responsibilities promote early civic engagement.



Figure 4.1.10: Children learning about helping (TeachersMag, Doing Good Together)

Example Adaptations for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers:

- **Infants:** Infants learn social interaction through caregiver responses and early joint attention activities (e.g., looking at books together).
- **Toddlers:** Toddlers can practice sharing, expressing emotions, and solving simple conflicts with guidance from caregivers or peers.
- **Preschoolers:** Preschoolers can participate in cooperative group games, vote on class decisions (e.g., which song to sing), and learn to use polite words like “please” and “thank you.” They can also practice empathy by taking care of classroom pets or helping each other with tasks.

By integrating these components into early childhood education, the NCSS framework encourages educators to create an inclusive, diverse, and dynamic social studies curriculum that fosters children's curiosity and understanding of the world.

How do the principles outlined by the NCSS framework translate into effective teaching practices for young children? The following section will explore this question by examining contemporary social studies curricula and their application in early childhood education."

Five Early Childhood Themes



Figure 4.1.11: Five Early Childhood Themes

While the NCSS framework is designed for children from kindergarten through 12th grade, it can sometimes be a bit high-level for early childhood learners. The concepts are broad, focusing on a variety of social studies themes that require a deeper level of abstraction and understanding. For young children, these concepts need to be broken down and made more relatable to their immediate world.

To make the NCSS framework more accessible for young children, the concepts are simplified and connected to their immediate experiences. Social Studies and Me, authored by Sally Anderson, adapts the ten NCSS themes into five core ideas that are engaging and developmentally appropriate for early learners. The five main themes are: **I am a Person, Families, Friends, Community,** and **The Big World**, making social studies more relevant and meaningful to young children.

By breaking down the ten complex NCSS themes into five developmentally appropriate early childhood themes, teachers can provide a clear, structured approach to introducing young children to social studies. This method connects each theme to children's daily lives, helping them build a foundation that they can expand upon as they grow.

The process of understanding social studies in early childhood is much like skipping a rock across a pond. As the rock skips across the water, it creates concentric circles that expand outward. Similarly, we start with what is most familiar to a child—what they know best and have the most experience with: themselves and the people they know. From there, the circles gradually expand outward, moving to broader concepts like families, friends, communities, and eventually the big world. This approach ensures that young children first grasp the foundations of their immediate environment before moving outward to understand the larger, more global concepts that affect their lives. This gradual, concentric-circle approach helps children build on what they already know and experience, creating a solid foundation for future learning. Starting with the most personal and relevant themes makes social studies concepts both accessible and meaningful for young learners, setting them up for a deeper understanding of the world as they grow older.

As we explore these themes in more detail, we will look at each one individually to see how they relate to young children's everyday experiences and how they can be used to foster a deeper understanding of their world. By breaking down the NCSS themes into these five accessible ideas, we can ensure that social studies learning begins with what is most familiar to children and gradually expands to broader concepts that shape their lives.

1. I am a Person



This theme focuses on developing self-awareness and understanding one's identity, which is a key part of the NCSS framework's theme of **Individual Development and Identity.**

Self and Others: Children explore their own identity by learning about their likes, dislikes, and preferences. They understand how they are similar to and different from others in their family, classroom, and beyond.

Civic Ideals and Practices: This theme also introduces children to early concepts of fairness and responsibility, which are foundational to their understanding of civic ideals. Activities such as taking turns, listening to others, and expressing their needs and wants are integral to developing early civic awareness. These activities help children learn their roles and responsibilities as individuals.

Developmentally Appropriate Examples

Infants: Infants begin to recognize themselves through mirror play and caregiver interactions. They are introduced to self-awareness by observing and mirroring emotions.

Toddlers: Toddlers engage in "All About Me" activities, where they explore personal characteristics like their name, favorite color, and family.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers create identity-based projects like "All About Me" books or self-portraits, helping them articulate their personal identity. They also begin to understand the importance of respecting themselves and others.

2. Families



This theme emphasizes the importance of family structures and the roles of family members, tying into the NCSS framework's theme of **Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.**

People and Places: Children learn about the people in their immediate environment, especially their family members. They begin to explore how families function, their different roles, and how they support one another.

Civic Ideals and Practices: Early childhood activities focus on understanding the role of family in teaching cooperation, sharing, and care for each other. Children are introduced to the concepts of responsibility and caring for others within the family.

Interdependence: Children also begin to understand that families are interconnected and that everyone has a role in supporting and nurturing each other.

Developmentally Appropriate Examples

Infants: Infants form bonds with their caregivers and begin to learn basic concepts of trust and dependency within the family.

Toddlers: Toddlers learn about their family members through stories, songs, and simple discussions about who does what in the family (e.g., "Mom cooks dinner, Dad plays with you").

Preschoolers: Preschoolers engage in more detailed family role-play, where they mimic the actions of parents or siblings. They may also share stories about their families and traditions.

3. Friends



This theme is centered around building positive relationships and understanding social roles within friendships, which ties into the NCSS framework's focus on **Civic Ideals and Practices.**

Civic Ideals and Practices: Children learn about fairness, cooperation, and empathy in their relationships with friends. They practice social skills like sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts.

Interdependence: This theme also highlights how friendships are built on mutual support and understanding. Children are introduced to the idea that friendships are based on give-and-take and interdependence.

Developmentally Appropriate Examples

Infants: Infants begin to develop social bonds through interactions with caregivers and peers. They start to respond to others' emotions, recognizing when someone is happy or sad.

Toddlers: Toddlers practice taking turns and sharing during group activities or games. They engage in simple role-play scenarios where they pretend to be friends playing together.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers deepen their understanding of friendship by discussing what it means to be a good friend and practicing social skills through cooperative games and group work. They may create friendship-themed art or stories to express their understanding.

4. Community



This theme focuses on how children interact with and understand their local community, aligning with the NCSS framework's themes of **People, Places, and Environments and Time, Continuity, and Change.**

People and Places: Children explore the local community, learning about places like parks, libraries, and schools. They understand the roles of community helpers such as firefighters, police officers, and teachers.

Time, Continuity, and Change: Children are introduced to the idea that communities change over time, whether through family growth, changes in leadership, or improvements in local infrastructure.

Civic Ideals and Practices: Children learn about the importance of contributing to their community through small acts of kindness and helping others (e.g., cleaning up, sharing with peers). They also start to understand basic community rules and the importance of following them to maintain a healthy community.

Developmentally Appropriate Examples:

Infants: Infants begin to recognize familiar faces and places in their immediate environment, such as caregivers, family, or familiar spots in their neighborhood.

Toddlers: Toddlers are introduced to the roles of community helpers through stories or visits from professionals (e.g., firefighters, postal workers). They also begin to identify places like the school and the park.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers may map out their community or engage in a pretend-play activity where they act as community helpers. They also talk about how their community has changed over time (e.g., how a park or building was built).

5. The Big World



This theme broadens children's understanding of the global world, connecting them to the NCSS framework's theme of **Global Connections and Interdependence.**

Global Connections: Children begin to understand the world beyond their immediate surroundings. They learn about different cultures, languages, and traditions from around the world.

Interdependence: This theme highlights how people, communities, and countries are interconnected. Children learn that what happens in one part of the world can impact other parts and that global cooperation is important for solving global issues.

Developmentally Appropriate Examples:

Infants: Infants may be exposed to multicultural music, visuals of animals from around the world, or simple books with diverse characters.

Toddlers: Toddlers are introduced to the idea of different countries and cultures through songs, stories, and images. They may engage in activities like making crafts from different cultures.

Preschoolers: Preschoolers may celebrate global holidays or engage in projects that explore life in different countries, such as learning basic greetings in different languages or creating maps of the world.

Age Appropriate Children's Books for Social Studies

As we explore these foundational themes, it's important to connect them to age-appropriate activities and examples that are relevant to young children's experiences. By breaking down these concepts into familiar and understandable ideas, we can help children develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their relationships, and the world around them. The following section highlights how these themes—self-awareness, family, friendship, community, and global connections—are reflected in age-appropriate books for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. These books not only entertain but also provide valuable opportunities to discuss key social studies ideas like identity, empathy, cooperation, and community, offering young learners a meaningful way to explore and appreciate the diversity of the world they live in.

I am a Person Theme (National Council of Social Studies Theme: Self and Others)

I Am a Person Theme Books for Infants

Age-Appropriate Book for Infants	
Book: Baby Faces Author: Margaret Miller Why It Fits: This book is perfect for infants as it showcases a variety of expressions and emotions, helping babies identify their own feelings and begin recognizing emotions in others. It encourages emotional awareness and self-recognition through simple, clear pictures of babies' faces.	Book: I Love You Book Author: Todd Parr Why It Fits: This book introduces infants to the concept of unconditional love through simple, heartfelt text and vibrant illustrations. By expressing affection in various situations, it helps infants feel valued and secure, reinforcing the foundational understanding of familial bonds and personal worth.

I am a Person Theme Books for Toddlers

Age-Appropriate Book for Toddlers	
Book: Llama Llama Red Pajama Author: Anna Dewdney Why It Fits: This book introduces toddlers to the concept of emotions and relationships. In the story, Llama Llama experiences feelings of fear and separation from his mother, a universal experience that helps toddlers recognize and understand their own emotions. It supports the development of social-emotional skills and self-awareness.	Book: I Love All of Me Author: Lori Grover Why It Fits: The book is a celebration of individuality and helps young children appreciate their physical and emotional selves, contributing to their sense of belonging in society.

I am a Person Theme Books for Preschoolers

Age-Appropriate Book for Preschoolers	
Book: I Like Myself! Author: Karen Beaumont Why It Fits: This vibrant, fun book promotes self-love and confidence. It encourages preschoolers to celebrate who they are, regardless of how others might see them. It's a perfect match for exploring self-identity and self-expression in a positive and relatable way.	Book: I Love All of Me Author: Lori Grover Why It Fits: The book is a celebration of individuality and helps young children appreciate their physical and emotional selves, contributing to their sense of belonging in society.

Families (NCSS Theme: Individuals, Groups and Institutions)

Families Theme Books for Infants

Age-Appropriate Book for Infants	
Book: I Love You All Ways Author: Marianne Richmond Why It Fits: This book highlights the unconditional love between family members. The simple, repetitive language and soothing illustrations help infants begin to understand the concept of family bonds. The gentle messages of love and security promote early emotional connections, making it a perfect introduction to the idea of family relationships for the youngest learners.	Book: Babies Love Hugs Author: Cottage Door Press Why It Fits: This book is ideal for infants as it introduces various forms of affection through simple text and interactive lift-a-flap features. By showcasing animal families expressing love, it fosters early understanding of familial bonds and emotional connections. The engaging flaps encourage fine motor skill development, making it a delightful choice for introducing the concept of family love to young children.

Families Theme Books for Toddlers

Age-Appropriate Book for Toddlers	
Book: The Family Book Author: Todd Parr Why It Fits: This book explores the diversity of families in a fun and engaging way. It emphasizes that every family is unique and offers a wonderful way for toddlers to think about family structure, roles, and traditions.	Book: I Love You Like No Otter Author: Rose Rossner Why It Fits: This board book celebrates the unconditional love between parents and their little ones. Through animal-themed puns and soft illustrations, it conveys affection and bonding, making it ideal for introducing infants to the concept of family love.

Families Theme Books for Preschoolers

Age-Appropriate Book for Preschoolers	
Book: Who's in My Family? Author: Robie H. Harris Why It Fits: This book helps preschoolers understand different family structures. It covers topics like adoption, siblings, and the idea that families come in all shapes and sizes, making it a great way for children to explore and appreciate their own family and others.	Book: How to Babysit a Grandpa Author: Jean Reagan Why It Fits: A fun and sweet story about a child spending time with their grandparent, this book helps preschoolers understand family relationships and the joy of spending time with loved ones.

Friends (NCSS Theme: Civic Ideals and Practices)

Friends Theme Books for Infants

Age-Appropriate Book for Infants	
Book: Baby's Animal Friends Author: Phoebe Dunn Why It Fits: This book introduces toddlers to the concept of friendship through interactions between a young child and various animals.	Book: Llama Llama Loves to Share Author: Anna Dewdney Why It Fits: This book focuses on the themes of kindness, sharing, and friendship in a gentle way, helping infants understand the foundational ideas of empathy and cooperation.

Friends Theme Books for Toddlers

Age-Appropriate Book for Toddlers	
Book: Teeth Are Not for Biting Author: Elizabeth Verdick Why It Fits: This book addresses the behavior of biting, offering positive alternatives and emphasizing that teeth are for chewing food, not for biting people. It helps toddlers understand appropriate ways to express themselves and interact with friends, fostering healthy social development.	Book: Little Blue Truck Makes a Friend Author: Alice Shertle Why It Fits: The book shows how kindness and inclusion help build friendships. When a new neighbor, Chuck the woodchuck, moves to the farm, the animals are initially hesitant due to his differences. However, Little Blue Truck leads by example, welcoming Chuck with a cheerful "Beep! Beep!" and encouraging others to do the same. This story teaches toddlers the value of embracing differences and the joy of making new friends.

Friends Theme Books for Preschoolers

Age-Appropriate Book for Preschoolers	
Book: Best Friends Author: Jacqueline Wilson Why It Fits: This book is perfect for preschoolers learning about friendship and the value of supportive, loving relationships. It explores the ups and downs of friendship and how to be a good friend to others, emphasizing sharing, kindness, and problem-solving.	Book: The Rainbow Fish Author: Marcus Pfister Why It Fits: This classic tale about sharing and friendship emphasizes the rewards of kindness and generosity, helping preschoolers understand the social importance of giving to others.

Community (NCSS Theme: Civic Ideals and Practices)

Community Theme Books for Infants

Age-Appropriate Book for Infants	
Book: Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site Author: Sherri Duskey Rinker Why It Fits: This book introduces infants to the concept of community work through a fun, rhyming story about construction vehicles working together. It's a gentle introduction to community helpers and the idea that people work together in a community to achieve common goals.	Book: My Neighborhood Author: Maddie Frost Why It Fits: This book introduces infants to the concept of community by showing neighborhood helpers and their roles. Through simple text and illustrations, it fosters an early understanding of how people work together in a community. The sturdy design makes it suitable for young children.

Community Theme Books for Toddlers

Age-Appropriate Book for Toddlers	
Book: The Wheels on the Firetruck Author: Jeffrey Burton Why It Fits: Why It Fits: This book fits the community theme by introducing toddlers to the important role of firefighters within their community. Through a familiar song structure and engaging illustrations, children learn about the various parts of a firetruck and the actions of firefighters as they work together to keep the community safe. It fosters an understanding of community helpers and encourages toddlers to recognize how different roles contribute to the well-being of their neighborhood.	Book: City Shapes Author: Diana Murray Why It Fits: This engaging book introduces toddlers to different shapes and features found in a city, helping them learn about urban environments in a playful way while also exploring the idea of community spaces.

Community Theme Books for Preschoolers

Age-Appropriate Book for Preschoolers	
Book: A Day in the Life of a Firefighter Author: Heather Adamson Why It Fits: This nonfiction book is perfect for preschoolers to understand the role of firefighters within a community. It introduces them to the concept of community helpers and shows how these roles support the safety and well-being of the community.	Book: Clifford Takes a Trip Author: Norman Bridwell Why It Fits: This book introduces preschoolers to the idea of traveling within their community, as Clifford the big red dog visits different places. It encourages children to think about their neighborhood and how they interact with local spaces.

The Big World (NCSS Theme: Global Connections)

The Big World Theme Books for Infants

Age-Appropriate Book for Infants	
Book: Global Babies Bedtime Author: Maya Ajmera Why It Fits: Why It Fits: This board book introduces infants to the concept of the big world by showcasing babies from various cultures preparing for bed. Through simple text and vibrant photographs, it highlights bedtime routines across different countries, fostering an early appreciation for global diversity. The book's durable design makes it suitable for young children, providing a gentle introduction to the world beyond their immediate surroundings.	Book: Global Babies Author: Maya Ajmera Why It Fits: This simple, yet impactful book introduces infants to babies from around the world, showing how children everywhere are alike while gently introducing the idea of different cultures and communities.

The Big World Theme Books for Toddlers

Age-Appropriate Book for Toddlers	
Book: Babies Around the World Author: Puck Why It Fits: This book fits the "The Big World" theme by introducing toddlers to babies from various cultures around the globe. Through simple, engaging text and vibrant illustrations, it highlights the similarities and differences in how babies from different countries live, eat, and play. The book fosters early global awareness, helping toddlers appreciate the diversity of people and cultures while also recognizing the shared experiences of childhood. It provides a gentle introduction to the concept of a larger, interconnected world.	Book: We All Belong Author: Nathalie Lété Why It Fits: This vibrant book celebrates diversity by showcasing children from various backgrounds, highlighting that all people, despite differences, belong to the same world. It helps toddlers grasp the importance of inclusivity, acceptance, and shared humanity.

The Big World Theme Books for Preschoolers

Age-Appropriate Book for Preschoolers	
Book: Where Are You Going Manyoni? Author: Catherine Stock Why It Fits: This book fits the "The Big World" theme by introducing preschoolers to the daily life of a young girl named Manyoni in rural Zimbabwe. Through the story of her two-hour walk to school, children are exposed to the geography, wildlife, and cultural aspects of Southern Africa. The detailed watercolor illustrations depict over 30 animals and the natural landscape, providing a rich visual experience that broadens children's understanding of the world beyond their immediate surroundings.	Book: Global Babies Author: Maya Ajmera Why It Fits: This simple, yet impactful book introduces infants to babies from around the world, showing how children everywhere are alike while gently introducing the idea of different cultures and communities.

Early childhood social studies education is not just about teaching children about the world but about helping them develop the skills and understanding they need to engage with the world in a meaningful way. By starting with concepts most familiar to them, such as their own identity, family, and community, young children can gradually expand their understanding to include broader ideas of diversity, global connections, and the importance of cooperation and empathy."

The books included in this chapter serve as valuable resources to guide young learners through their exploration. Each book has been thoughtfully selected to introduce social studies themes in a developmentally appropriate manner, encouraging children to reflect on themselves, their relationships with others, and the world around them. As children engage with these stories, they gain knowledge and develop the emotional and social skills needed to become responsible, compassionate members of their communities and the larger world. By weaving together these concepts through engaging and diverse literature, we provide children with the foundation they need to be thoughtful, respectful, and curious citizens of the world.

Social Studies in Today's Curricula

Children are born into social studies. From birth, they begin exploring their world. At each stage of early development—infant, toddler, preschool, and primary—children look around and try to make sense of their social and physical environments. They gradually learn more about their expanding community and eventually come to see themselves as citizens.

What is relevant social studies subject matter and what is a useful approach for early childhood educators teaching social studies today? The answers to these questions depend, of course, on children's ages and stages of development as well as their child care or school setting.



Figure 4.1.12: Exploring. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Adjoa J. Burrowes)

Social studies, currently and historically, is a field designed to meet the educational needs of society. It emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a holistic approach to citizenship education using the techniques of social science: raising questions and gathering, analyzing, discussing, and displaying data. Elementary schools at that time focused on basic education— reading, writing, and arithmetic. To help immigrant children understand the history and social mores of their new country, teachers read stories about the early formation of the United States and focused on children's development of the virtues exemplified in moralistic stories (such as those in the McGuffey Readers). A debate emerged between educators who sought to teach the facts of history and those who sought to develop students' appreciation and understanding of the unique aspects of U.S. history.

After several study commissions of the National Education Association (NEA) had grappled with the issues of an increasingly complex society, schools began in 1916 to integrate history, geography, and political science—teaching students how to think about social issues and content—so that graduates could be effective employees in a democratic society. The NEA saw social studies as "the subject matter related directly to the organization and development of human society, and to individuals as members of social groups" (1916, 5). "The 'subject matter' for this new school subject was to be drawn from the most influential social sciences of the time—history, geography, and civics— and blended together as one school subject for the purpose of helping children understand our American heritage and acquire the skills and sensitivities basic to constructive participation in our nation's democratic society" (Maxim 2006, 13)

Taking an Integrated Approach

Progressive educators such as John Dewey in the 1930s encouraged teachers to use social studies as the foundation for activity-based learning built on children's interests. Dewey maintained that learning involves firsthand experience and draws upon many instructional resources beyond the textbook. He advocated child learning and teaching activities that begin with the familiar experiences of daily life (Dewey [1916] 1966). In farming communities, this might mean growing wheat in the classroom, observing the process, and documenting the progress of plant growth; in the city, children might study the work of the milk-wagon driver and the chimney sweep.

Accordingly, from the inception of the field, social studies teaching used an integrated, project-oriented approach that continues today. Preschool investigations now might consider such child questions as why, in December, people in Florida wear different clothes than people in New York. In following up, the teacher and children may look at the role climate plays in determining what clothes people wear. They could collect data—look at weather maps; make weather charts; read stories about weather and clothes; consult the weather channel on TV or on the Internet; and draw, cut, and paste pictures—to explore climatic differences.

At the primary level, a project might more directly align with state standards but still follow child interest and a project orientation. For example, children may consider what to do when there are not enough silver crayons for everyone in the class. Besides evincing the obvious answer of sharing resources, the question triggers an investigation of a basic economics unit on supply and demand. The silver crayon discussion evolves into data collection about economic decisions at the classroom, school, and community levels, fostering eight-year-olds' burgeoning understanding of issues like resources and scarcity.



Figure 4.1.13: Baby and toddler. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

Another powerful influence on the child-centered curricular and instructional approach for social studies came in the 1960s with the work of Jerome Bruner. In The Process of Education (1960), Bruner explained spiraling curriculum, in which a topic, such as democracy, is introduced to children at an age-appropriate level. Activities with young children might focus on classroom rules to keep order and be fair to all. In the later grades, children would study government operations and subtleties of democracy.

With Bruner's influence, inquiry-based teaching became a central instructional strategy for social studies. He stressed the doing of social science in the learning process. For example, in considering "What is a family?" children would gather information to elaborate their understandings of family, appropriate to their ages and stages of development. They answer complex questions through investigation of the big ideas and questions that require critical thinking (see Zarrillo 2004).

In the preschool–primary years, the big ideas derive from topics related to self, family, and community. They might include immigration (How did/do people come to the United States?), transportation (How do we move around in our community?), banking (What does the bank do with money?), and heritage (How did our ancestors live?). The tradition of holistic instruction, using the content and processes of the social sciences, continues. It is evident in the scope of and sequence for social studies in the primary grades, as defined by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS):

- Kindergarten—awareness of self in the social setting
- First grade—the individual in school and family life
- Second grade—the neighborhood
- Third grade—sharing the earth with others in the community (NCSS 1984, 376–85)



Figure 4.1.14: Three children playing together. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

More recently, while preserving the developmental sequence, the NCSS organized social studies content around 10 large themes:

- culture;
- time continuity and change;
- people, places, and environments;
- individual development and identity;
- individuals, groups, and institutions;
- power, authority, and governance;
- production, distribution, and consumption;
- science, technology, and society;
- global connections; and
- civic ideals and practices (NCSS 1994).

Each theme guides teachers in selecting content or in deriving content based on child interest. Obviously, theme evolution and development depend on children's previous experiences, developmental stages, and skills. For example, time continuity and change for four-year-olds might mean a study of grandparents; global connections for third-graders might include e-mail correspondence with children in Australia.

From the inception of the field, social studies teaching used an integrated, project-oriented approach that continues today.

Social Studies for Today's Early Childhood Setting

Using the underlying concepts from social science, teachers can draw content broadly from the 10 themes and use inquiry-based processes to foster curiosity, problem-solving skills, and appreciation of investigation. Social studies curricula can support children as they solve classroom and school issues as well as investigate neighborhood and community problems with the goal of enhancing understanding and civic awareness, and pride. Thus, broadly defined, social studies include the following disparate but intertwined content:

- Social learning and self-concept development, including character development. (While building a block structure together, young children can learn to negotiate, solve problems, and cope with strong feelings.)
- Academic content of social studies based on the NCSS's 10 themes. (In the primary grades, children throughout the country usually study the history of the community and state.)

- Classroom community development. (Toddlers develop an understanding of group life that requires putting toys away and sharing materials.)
- Foundational understandings for civic engagement. (Children of all ages appreciate the diversity of their friends and classmates.)

There is an inextricable linking of family, culture, and community in the teaching and learning of social studies. The evolution of each child's social understanding about the world begins with self and family, expanding to the child care and educational setting. In developing these social inquiries, teachers first focus on what children know and are able to do. Then they help children scaffold additional learning to elaborate their understandings of the world around them. A sensitive, respectful approach to child and family sets the tone for each child's broader social learning experience.

Social studies curricula can support children as they solve classroom and school issues as well as investigate neighborhood and community problems.

Social Studies as Self-Development

The curricular focus of self-development in a social context starts with the classroom and the people in it: children, teachers, caregivers, and families. Personal interactions facilitate a child's understanding of the social world of the classroom, child care program, school, and community. For each age group— infant, toddler, preschool, and primary—social interactions form the foundation for building curriculum. In responsive child care and school settings, families' home cultures influence this curricular foundation. Therefore, the social context includes an ethical orientation as well as appropriate behavior that begins with family values.

With experiences in child care programs and school, children modify their views of themselves—who they are in the social world. Beginning in children as young as age two, these experiences influence character—an individual's approach to ethical issues. Ethical issues include decisions about honesty, fairness, courtesy, and respect for others. School experience facilitates the development of mainstream social behaviors and values among children. Children's incorporation of such behaviors and values is expected by child care centers, schools, and communities. Toddlers in child care settings learn that they cannot grab a chunk of banana from a friend's plate but must take pieces from the serving platter in turn. Preschoolers take turns doing jobs that keep the classroom tidy and running smoothly.



Figure 4.1.15: Group play. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

One of the most prominent early arguments for providing group play opportunities for young children stemmed from the idea that social and play experiences socialize young children—that is, help them learn the ropes for engaging in the discourse of mainstream "polite society" (see McMillan [1919] 1930; Read & Patterson 1980). Throughout history and in diverse cultural situations, the appropriate functioning of young children in the social world depends upon values articulated by the stakeholders who determine the educational standards for the time. In the twenty-first century, young children must operate in a society that values respect for diversity and appreciation of conventions and rules in a broad spectrum. Thus, the content of social studies

becomes even more complex and engaging.

Choosing the Content for Social Studies

For the youngest citizens—infants and toddlers—the content is self-development in a social world. Adults enhance this self-development by providing safe, colorful, intriguing toys and materials to foster curiosity. Infants and toddlers play alone, by the side of others, and with others to elaborate their social understandings of themselves and others. But they also need nurturance and respect from teachers and families. In these early years, teachers encourage respect for others and provide opportunities to learn about various cultures by singing songs and reading stories from various viewpoints and cultures, displaying pictures that reflect families in the community, and modeling an appreciation for all cultures and backgrounds.

In the preschool and primary years, social studies offer a structure for broad, theme-based content—content organized around a topic and offering multiple entry points and significant opportunities for investigation. For children, such content serves as a training ground for acquiring problem-solving skills as well as a laboratory for the development and elaboration of interpersonal coping skills and strategies: "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (NCSS 1993, 3).



Figure 4.1.16: Group art project. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

Preschool and primary-age children can develop a sense of civic responsibility through the exploration of rich thematic units such as a study of food, clothing, shelter, childhood, money, government, communication, family living, or transportation (Alleman & Brophy 2001, 2002, 2003). Using these themes as starting points, children and teachers form hypotheses, gather data, summarize, and make conclusions. Finally, children organize and present the data in pictures, with maps and charts, in dioramas, in PowerPoint presentations, and in other ways appropriate to child understanding. Not only do they use the skills of social scientists in these investigations and learn about civic engagement, but they also read, manage, and display data.

In the twenty-first century, young children must operate in a society that values respect for diversity and appreciation of conventions and rules in a broad spectrum.

Choosing the Processes for Social Studies

Teaching strategies in preschool and primary social studies include individual investigations in the library, in the field, and on the Internet; interviews; small-group collaboration; and large-group discussions. The scale of these investigations varies depending on the age and development of the child. For example, in interviews with a grandparent or older adult, three-year-olds might ask, "What was your favorite fruit when you were little?" The class could then collect the names of the fruits and, with the teacher's help, make a chart to show the grandparents' answers (oranges, bananas, and so on). For kindergartners, small-group collaboration might involve making a map of the classroom, with different groups assigned a portion of the room. Second-graders might go

online to collect information about garbage collection and recycling in their community.



Figure 4.1.17: Group reviewing chart. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

The classroom environment must support children's use of these approaches to learning. In thinking about the space, teachers should consider not only the room arrangement but also schedules and how the contents of bulletin boards, learning centers, and resource areas may be arrayed to encourage child discovery.

- Room arrangement—Traffic patterns match the activities planned. Learning centers are clearly set up and defined by topic, with appropriate space for the activities. Equipment and materials are accessible and grouped to encourage child management of them.
- Schedule—There is a balance between individual, small-group, and large-group activities. A well-developed schedule includes large blocks of time during the week to support theme-based curricular endeavors (Berry & Mindes 1993).

Teaching strategies include individual investigations in the library, in the field, and on the Internet; interviews; small group collaboration; and large group discussions.

The way teachers allocate space clearly shows the values and culture of the community (Gandini 1998). A classroom that welcomes and encourages social studies has posters displaying children's questions, results of data gathered, child-created pictures, and structures that document learning, along with comfortable spaces for individual and small-group work. The classroom may include materials passed from one group of children to another—for example, a book on the previous group's trip to the forest preserve becomes a part of cultural history and a resource for the class. The room also displays materials that families contribute to the ongoing projects and contains references to field trips made as part of the social studies investigations.

Seeing social studies as both content (organized around important child questions) and process (action-oriented strategies) prevents educators from considering social studies as an adjunct to other subject areas. An adjunct approach toward social studies is haphazard. Thoughtful teachers avoid stereotypical poems about Thanksgiving and occasional and inconsistent lessons on character traits like courtesy. Rather than posting their own classroom rules, good teachers collaborate on rules with young children, encouraging them to think about how to achieve respect and order. Effective teachers know, as they teach children to read, write, compute, and problem solve, that they also must

- assist children in social/emotional growth,
- emphasize holidays that have community meaning,
- seek an anti-bias approach to values,
- collaborate with families, and
- foster the development of integrity in individuals and groups of children (Mindes & Donovan 2001).



Figure 4.1.18: Sharing toys. (CC-BY-NC-SA, Ellen B. Senisi)

Through the use of social studies themes, teachers can integrate seemingly distinct goals into meaningful investigations. Using a developmentally appropriate practice model (Bredekamp & Copple 1997), teachers can develop the natural social studies curriculum. Here are some ideas for thematic curriculum, with examples:

Build on what children already know. For instance, after studying the neighborhood and community, move on to the home state.

Develop concepts and processes of social studies rather than focusing on isolated facts. For example, create maps visually showing the classroom, the school, or the community.

Provide hands-on activities. Have children draw a timeline showing when each child was born, or make a chart to show how many brothers and sisters each child in the class has.

Use relevant social studies throughout the year. Conduct child discussions about class problems, revising class rules accordingly, or consider the concept of scarcity related to choices.

Capitalize on child interest (Katz & Card 2000). Consider why, say, the lake is closed to swimmers or what makes an airplane stay in the sky. Developed in this way, the curricula of social studies use big ideas to connect with children and deepen their understanding of their relevant social world.

Conclusion

Social studies as content and process is a vibrant and vital part of early childhood curricula. Social studies at the center of early childhood curricula offers the hope that the focus of education will be on the development of effective, efficient, ethical children who will approach their world non-simplistically and thoughtfully. With the help of good teachers, children will not only absorb the content that focuses on citizenship education in all its permutations, but also learn how to learn and how to consider multiple perspectives.

The curricula of social studies use big ideas to connect with children and deepen their understanding of their relevant social world.

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4.2: Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Learning Experiences

Introduction

In early childhood education, it is essential to first **observe and understand our students' interests, developmental stages, and individual needs before planning a lesson.** This approach ensures that the lesson is **relevant** and **meaningful** to the children's lives and **appropriately challenging for their growth and learning.** When lessons are tailored to the students' interests and abilities, children are more likely to engage with the material, make deeper connections to the content, and experience a sense of success. A developmentally appropriate lesson provides just the right level of challenge, encouraging children to stretch their skills without feeling overwhelmed. This creates an environment where children feel supported and empowered, allowing for optimal learning.



Relevance: Select materials and themes that reflect the children's cultural backgrounds, family traditions, and community roles. For example, you might introduce a role-playing activity where children act out roles such as a firefighter, doctor, or teacher, which resonate with their everyday lives and the people in their communities.

Meaningfulness: Allow children to explore social concepts in ways that feel personally relevant to them. Encouraging them to share stories or traditions from their own cultures or communities fosters a deeper connection to the topic and helps them see the value of diverse perspectives.

Challenge: Provide activities that introduce new roles, responsibilities, or societal structures that extend the children's understanding of their world. For instance, exploring how different communities function or examining various cultural symbols helps promote critical thinking and social awareness, without overwhelming the children.

To create learning experiences that are both **relevant** and **appropriately challenging**, educators must apply the **principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice** (DAP). DAP ensures that lessons are tailored to children's developmental needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds, providing the right level of challenge and support. Below, we'll explore the three foundational areas of knowledge teachers should have about their students before planning lessons: age-appropriateness, individual-appropriateness, and social- and cultural-appropriateness.

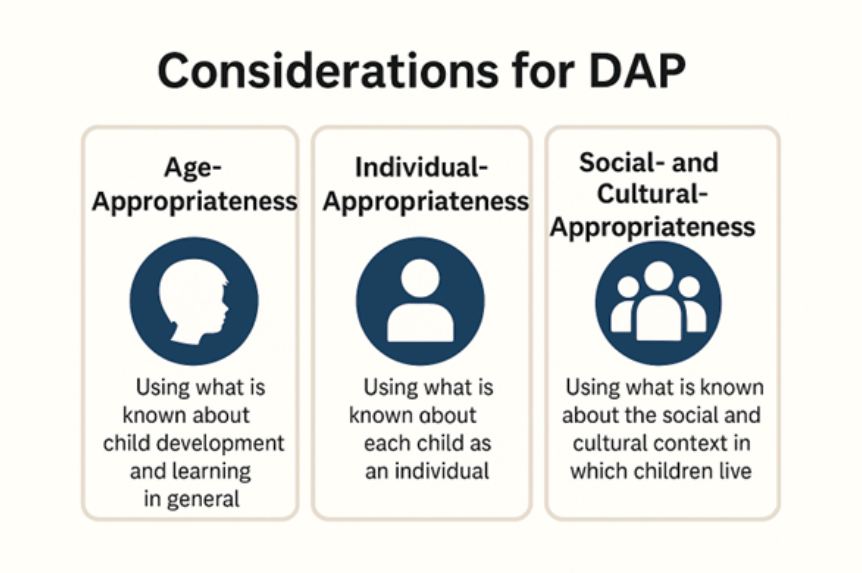


Figure 4.2.1: Considerations for DAP. (OpenAI)

1. **Age-Appropriateness** – using what is known about child development and learning in general. More specifically, this means: What is known about child development and learning: Knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and challenging to children.
2. **Individual-Appropriateness** – using what is known about each child as an individual to be responsive to each child. More specific examples of this include: What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group: [Necessary] to be able to adapt and be responsive to inevitable individual variation.
3. **Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness** – using what is known about the social and cultural context in which children live. This means: Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live: [Necessary] to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, 8–9)

But how do teachers ensure that they're creating lessons that meet these criteria? Take a look at the image of the **curriculum planning cycle**. Teachers carefully plan lessons by using this cycle, which includes essential steps: **observe**, **document**, **reflect**, **plan**, and **implement**. Through this continuous process, educators gather insights into each child's development, reflect on their observations, and design lessons that are responsive to the children's evolving needs, interests, and abilities.

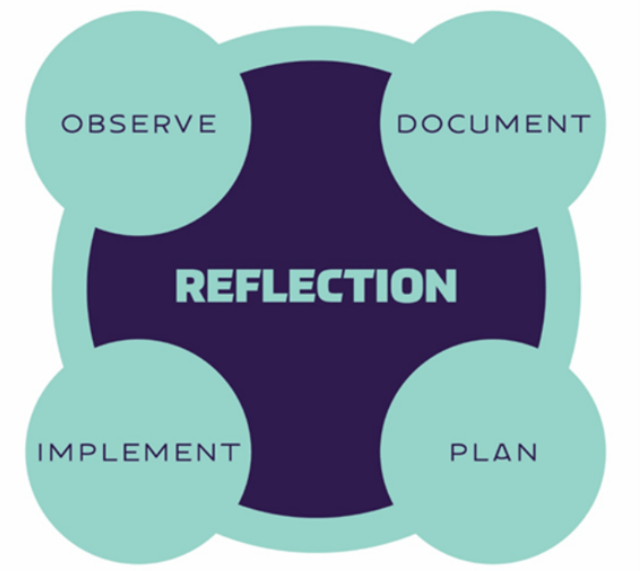


Figure 4.2.2: Curriculum Planning Cycle (Vicki Tanck)

Curriculum Planning Cycle: Observation, Documentation, Reflection, Implementation, and Planning

Effective curriculum planning follows a dynamic cycle, where **observation**, **documentation**, **reflection**, **implementation**, and **planning** continually inform one another. The process begins with carefully **observing** students, which allows educators to understand the individual needs and interests of each child. By **documenting** these observations, teachers gather valuable insights into what the children are learning and how they are engaging with the material. **Reflection** on these observations allows for thoughtful analysis of what is working well and what needs adjustment. This leads to **planning** future lessons that are responsive to the students' developmental stages and interests. Finally, **implementation** brings the plan to life in the classroom, where teachers can continue the cycle through observation and reflection.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Teaching Cycle

The WMELS Teaching Cycle is very similar to the first cycle that was explained above. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) Teaching Cycle includes the following steps:

1. **Assessment**:
   - The first step involves gathering information to determine the current developmental level of the child.
   - This step includes **Data Collection** and **Data Analysis** to understand where the child is in their development and to inform future planning.
   - The Assessment phase, which includes the "Observe" and "Document" stages, connects to the first planning cycle by gathering and recording information to inform future planning.
2. **Planning and Curriculum Goals**:
   - Based on the assessment, educators decide what should be done to promote the child's development.
   - This phase focuses on identifying what we want children to learn and establishing goals that guide the curriculum.
   - The Planning and Curriculum Goals phase corresponds to the "Plan" phase in the first cycle, where decisions are made about what to teach and how to support children's development.
3. **Implementation**:
   - In this phase, educators provide meaningful, experiential activities that support individual and group goals.
   - These activities are designed to foster development through supportive interactions and relationships with the children.
   - The Implementation phase aligns with the "Implement" phase in the first cycle, where planned activities are carried out to support children's learning and development.

The cycle is ongoing, as the implementation phase often leads back to assessment, ensuring continuous reflection and adjustment to meet children's needs.

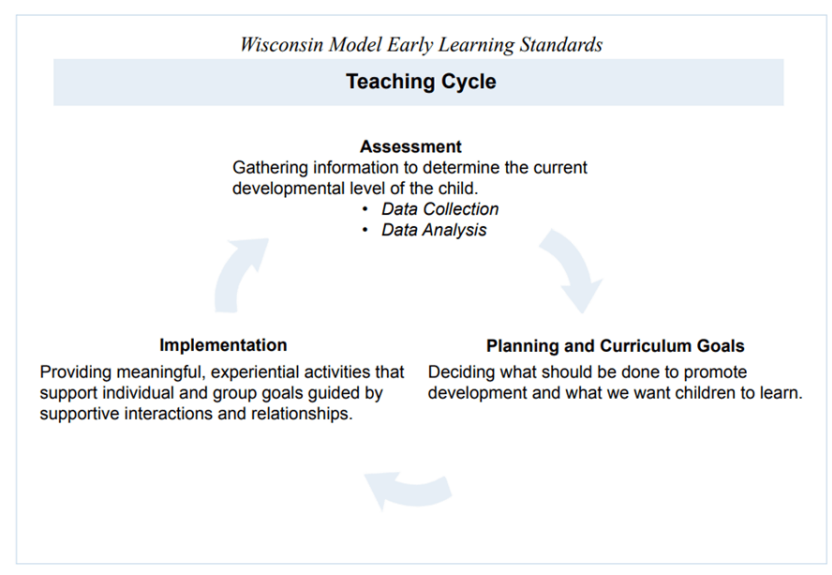


Figure 4.2.3: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Activities

To create effective and engaging learning experiences, it is essential to observe and understand the individual needs and interests of students. Planning with this knowledge ensures that lessons are developmentally appropriate, relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging. This approach aligns with **Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)**, which is grounded in principles of child development. DAP takes into account **age-appropriateness**, **individual-appropriateness**, and **cultural and linguistic appropriateness**, ensuring that learning experiences match children's developmental stages, reflect their personal experiences, and honor their cultural backgrounds. Developmentally Appropriate Practice is informed by the 9 Principles of Child Development and Learning as described below.

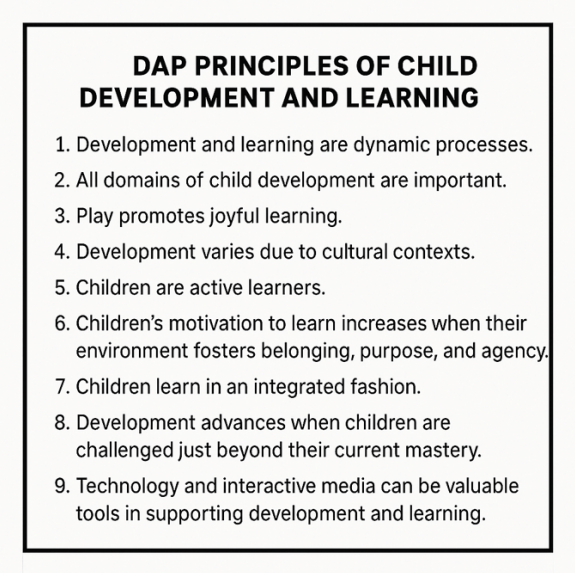


Figure 4.2.4: DAP Principles of Child Development and Learning (OpenAI)

The **9 principles of child development and learning** inform this approach by providing a deeper understanding of how children develop and learn. These principles include:

1. **Development and learning are dynamic processes**: Reflecting the complex interplay between a child's biological characteristics and the environment, where each shapes the other, ensuring that activities are both responsive and adaptable to a child's evolving needs.
2. **All domains of child development are important**: Physical, cognitive, social-emotional, linguistic (including bilingual/multilingual development), and approaches to learning all support each other, which underscores the need for **holistic** learning experiences that are meaningful and developmentally appropriate.
3. **Play promotes joyful learning**: Essential for all children, play fosters self-regulation, language, cognitive and social competencies, as well as content knowledge across disciplines. Play-based activities are **meaningful** and **appropriately challenging** as they support the development of foundational skills across all domains.
4. **Development varies due to cultural contexts**: This principle emphasizes that while general progressions of development can be identified, educators must consider individual and cultural differences. This ensures that lesson plans remain **relevant and culturally appropriate**, catering to the diverse backgrounds of students.
5. **Children are active learners**: Children take in and organize information through relationships and experiences, highlighting the importance of creating **engaging, child-centered** activities where learning is based on interactions with the environment.
6. **Children's motivation to learn increases when their environment fosters belonging, purpose, and agency**. This principle emphasizes the importance of connecting the school experience to children's home and community lives, making learning **relevant** and **meaningful** by building on children's existing knowledge.
7. **Children learn in an integrated fashion**: This principle encourages interdisciplinary learning, where lessons cut across subject areas, fostering **relevant and holistic learning experiences** that are not only developmentally appropriate but also **integrated** in nature.
8. **Development advances when children are challenged just beyond their current mastery**. Providing opportunities for reflection and practice helps ensure that activities are **appropriately challenging** and promote growth at an individual level.
9. **Technology and interactive media**: When used responsibly, technology can be a valuable tool in supporting children's development and learning, providing additional opportunities for engaging, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate activities.

Using Guiding Principles to Create Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Plans

Frameworks such as the Guiding Principles for the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) stress the importance of creating holistic, relational, and respectful learning opportunities. These frameworks align with the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), which emphasize understanding the individual needs, interests, and developmental stages of students. By incorporating DAP, educators can create experiences that are not only developmentally appropriate but also relevant and meaningful. This approach ensures that learning is tailored to children's developmental stages, personal experiences, and cultural backgrounds. The HSELOF Guiding Principles chart below illustrates how these frameworks support holistic, relational learning, reinforcing the core principles of DAP.

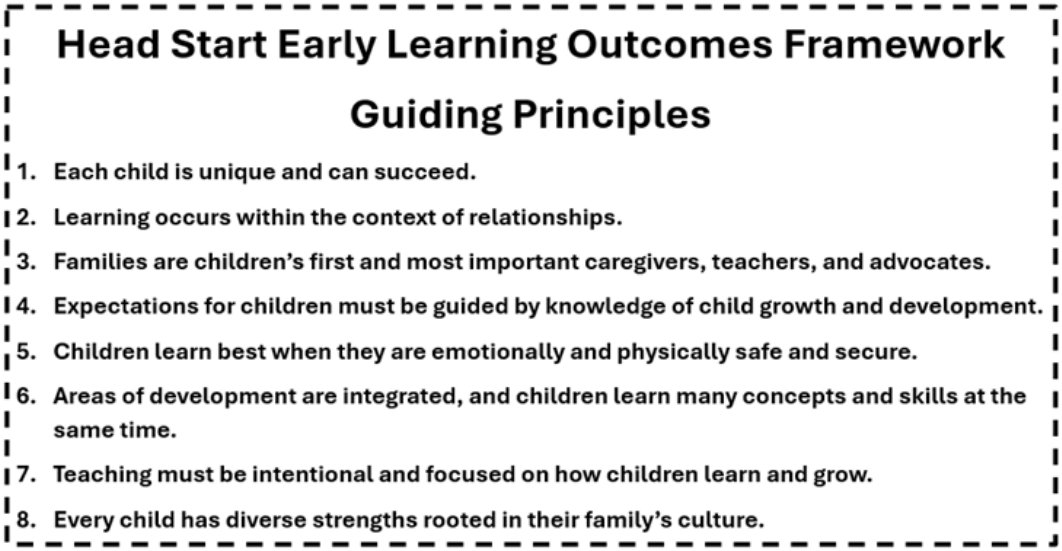


Figure 4.2.5: Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Guiding Principles

By incorporating the **Head Start Guiding Principles,** educators can create developmentally appropriate learning plans, support the child's unique growth, and provide challenges that are meaningful within the context of the child's environment, background, and relationships. Each principle is further described below.

1. **Each child is unique and can succeed.**

This principle emphasizes that each child has individual strengths, needs, and capabilities. To make a plan relevant and appropriately challenging, educators must consider the unique qualities of each child, ensuring that the plan is personalized to fit their developmental stage and learning style, making it meaningful and within their capacity for success.

2. **Learning occurs within the context of relationships.**

Learning is deeply connected to relationships, including those between children, teachers, families, and peers. By designing plans that recognize the importance of these relationships, educators create learning experiences that are not only meaningful but also relevant to the child's social and emotional context. This alignment ensures that the plan supports the child's development within a safe and supportive environment, making the challenges appropriate to their developmental needs.

3. **Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.**

A meaningful plan must involve families in the child's learning process, as families are central to the child's development. By incorporating family values, backgrounds, and expectations, the plan becomes relevant and culturally appropriate. Families provide insights that help make the challenges more accessible and meaningful, ensuring the child is appropriately challenged in a way that resonates with their home environment.

4. **Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.**

A plan must provide an environment where children feel safe and supported in order to be effective and meaningful. When children feel secure, they are more likely to engage in learning experiences that are appropriately challenging and relevant to their developmental needs. Ensuring emotional and physical safety allows the plan to be meaningful and ensures that challenges are encountered within a context of support.

5. **Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.**

This principle underscores the idea that children's learning and development span multiple domains (physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and linguistic). To ensure the plan is relevant and appropriately challenging, educators need to integrate these domains into the learning experience. By creating a balanced plan that addresses each domain, the curriculum becomes meaningful across all areas of development, challenging the child in a comprehensive manner.

6. **Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.**

This aligns directly with creating a plan that is relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging. Educators need to base their expectations on a deep understanding of child development to ensure the plan is suitable for each child's age, stage, and unique development. By considering developmental milestones and individual progress, educators can ensure that the challenges presented are achievable and stimulating.

7. **Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture.**

This principle emphasizes that each child's strengths are shaped by their family's culture and experiences. To create learning experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging, educators must recognize and incorporate these cultural strengths. By doing so, activities become more relatable and engaging, ensuring challenges are both motivating and achievable. This approach helps create an inclusive, culturally responsive environment where children's unique identities are celebrated and development is supported.

Using WMELS to Create Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Plans

WMELS Guiding Principles



1. All children are capable and competent.
2. Early relationships matter.
3. A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.
4. Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.
5. Children are individuals who develop at various rates.
6. Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.
7. Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.
8. Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.
9. Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.

Figure 4.2.6: WLEMS Guiding Principles

The **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standard Guiding Principles** emphasize the importance of providing developmentally appropriate, integrated learning experiences that consider the unique rate of development of each child, ensuring that learning plans remain both relevant and appropriately challenging across all domains. Each principle is described below.

1. **All children are capable and competent.** This principle asserts that all children, regardless of background or ability, are capable of learning and development. It aligns with the belief that all children should be provided with developmentally appropriate opportunities to thrive, emphasizing the need for teachers to support the growth of each child while ensuring that expectations are not developmentally inappropriate.
2. **Early relationships matter.** This principle underscores the significance of early relationships, particularly with adults, in shaping a child's growth and development. Strong, responsive relationships foster positive self-regulation, personal responsibility, and cooperative behaviors, which are foundational for both social-emotional development and later academic success.
3. **A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.** Children's development spans multiple interconnected domains, including social-emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical development. Effective learning experiences recognize these interconnections, ensuring that a child's growth in one area is supported by and integrated with others.
4. **Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.** This principle emphasizes the importance of grounding expectations and learning activities in a deep understanding of child development. Educators should plan experiences based on developmental stages and research into how children learn best, ensuring activities are both relevant and appropriately challenging.

5. **Children are individuals who develop at various rates.** Acknowledging the individuality of each child's development, this principle stresses the need for personalized learning experiences. It reminds educators that children develop at different rates and that learning plans must be flexible enough to cater to these individual differences, ensuring that each child is challenged appropriately.
6. **Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.** Children's development and learning are shaped by their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This principle calls for an inclusive approach that reflects and respects the cultural diversity of children, families, and environments, ensuring that learning opportunities are relevant and meaningful to each child's background.
7. **Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.** This principle highlights the range of abilities children may demonstrate within any given developmental domain. It supports the idea that learning experiences should be adaptable, allowing for differentiation to meet each child's developmental needs and competencies.
8. **Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.** Play is essential for young children's development, allowing them to explore, discover, and apply new skills. This principle emphasizes that learning should be embedded in play-based activities that encourage exploration, problem-solving, and peer interactions in both structured and unstructured contexts.
9. **Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.** The involvement of families is crucial in a child's learning process. This principle acknowledges the role of parents and caregivers as the first teachers and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between families, communities, and schools in fostering a child's growth and educational experiences.

These guiding principles provide a framework for designing and implementing developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and individually tailored learning experiences for young **children, ensuring that their early education supports all aspects of their development**.

The chart below shows how the guiding principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) align with the guiding principles for the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS).

DAP, ELOF, and WMELS Guiding Principles Alignment

DAP Guiding Principles	Head Start ELOF Guiding Principles	WMELS Guiding Principles
1. Development and learning are dynamic processes that reflect the complex interplay between a child's biological characteristics and the environment.	**ELOF 1.** Each child is unique and can succeed.	**WMELS 5.** Children are individuals who develop at various rates.
2. All domains of child development are important and interconnected. 7. Children learn in an integrated fashion that cuts across academic disciplines.	**ELOF 5.** Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time. **ELOF 6.** Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.	**WMELS 3.** A child's early learning and development is multidimensional. **WMELS 9.** Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.
3. Play promotes joyful learning and is essential for all children.	**ELOF 6.** Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.	**WMELS 4.** Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development. **WMELS 8.** Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.

DAP Guiding Principles	Head Start ELOF Guiding Principles	WMELS Guiding Principles
4. Variations due to cultural contexts, experiences, and individual differences must be considered.	**ELOF 7.** Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.	**WMELS 4.** Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development. **WMELS 6.** Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.
5. Children are active learners from birth.	**ELOF 2.** Learning occurs within the context of relationships. **ELOF 3.** Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.	**WMELS 2.** Early relationships matter. **WMELS 9.** Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.
6. Children's motivation to learn is increased when their learning environment fosters their sense of belonging, purpose, and agency. 8. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery.	**ELOF 4.** Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.	**WMELS 1.** All children are capable and competent.
9. Technology and interactive media can be valuable tools for supporting children's development and learning.	**ELOF 6.** Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.	**WMELS 4.** Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.

Relevant Developmental Domains

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), also referred to as the ELOF, includes five domains: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development. The image below illustrates how these domains differ between infants and toddlers, and preschoolers.

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/ TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

Figure 4.2.7: Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), also referred to as the ELOF. (Child Development)

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards also reflect five domains of learning: Health and Physical Development, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development and Communication, Approaches to Learning, and Cognition and General Knowledge. Each of those domains is further divided into 3 Sub-Domains. The graphic below shows the five domains of learning for WMELS.



Figure 4.2.8: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Domains

While children engage in multiple developmental domains through a single activity, the 'Approaches to Learning' domain is often the most aligned with your goals for integrating Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement learning experiences. Please see the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards(opens in new window) for detailed information on each of the 5 domains.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN

IV. APPROACHES TO LEARNING

A. CURIOSITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND PERSISTENCE

B. CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION

C. DIVERSITY IN LEARNING

Figure 4.2.9: Developmental Domain

The alignment of relevant developmental domains with lesson plans that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging can be explained by considering how each domain contributes to a holistic approach to child development. By addressing multiple developmental domains, lesson plans can ensure that activities engage children in ways that are appropriate for their developmental stage and challenging enough to promote growth. Here's how various developmental domains align with creating **social studies** lesson plans that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging:

1. **Physical Development: (WMELS Health and Physical Domain)**

Social studies activities that involve movement, spatial awareness, and collaboration contribute to **physical development**. Activities can encourage children to explore their environment in a safe and meaningful way. The plan should provide opportunities for children to engage physically while learning about the world around them, ensuring the challenges are developmentally appropriate.



Example

A **neighborhood walk** where children walk around the school or community, observing landmarks and talking about what they see. This encourages **physical development** by getting children moving and exploring their environment while making the activity **meaningful** as they connect it to their social studies theme.

2. **Social-Emotional Development: (WMELS Social and Emotional Development Domain)**

Social studies activities that focus on relationships, empathy, and understanding others' perspectives support **social-emotional development**. The activities should help children learn about themselves, their families, and their roles within their community while teaching valuable social skills like cooperation, sharing, and resolving conflicts.



Example

A **circle time discussion** about family traditions and cultural differences, where children share their own family experiences and listen to others. This activity helps children understand different cultural perspectives and develop empathy, making it **meaningful** and **appropriately challenging** as they connect it to their personal lives and social studies concepts.

3. **Language Development: (WMELS Language Development and Communication Domain)**

Social studies activities often involve storytelling, discussion, and vocabulary building, which are essential for **language and communication development**. The plan should include activities where children learn new vocabulary related to their community, country, and world, while also practicing their speaking and listening skills in a social context.



Example

A **storytelling activity** where children listen to a book about how people live in different parts of the world (e.g., *How Kids Live Around the World by Pavla Hanackova*) and then discuss the new vocabulary they learned. Children might describe where they live and what is special about their community, which challenges their **language development** while engaging them with social studies content in a **meaningful** and **developmentally appropriate** way.

4. **Creative and Aesthetic Development: (WMELS Approaches to Learning Domain)**

Creative activities that involve art, music, and dramatic play can help children engage with social studies content while developing their creativity. These activities should be designed to allow children to express themselves and make connections to the themes they are learning about in social studies.



Example

A **dramatic play activity** where children set up a pretend store or school, taking on roles like the cashier, teacher, or student, based on their understanding of community roles. This supports **creative development** while helping them connect social studies concepts to real-life experiences. The challenges involved in this activity, like problem-solving during play or taking on different roles, are **meaningfully** aligned with their developmental stage.

5. **Cognitive Development: (WMELS Cognition and General Knowledge Domain)**

Social studies activities that challenge children to think critically and solve problems are crucial for **cognitive development**. The plan must include activities that promote understanding of concepts such as community, geography, and roles within society, ensuring children are challenged in ways that are engaging but not overwhelming.



Example

A **community helper sorting activity** where children group images of community helpers (like firefighters, doctors, etc.) based on their roles and functions. This promotes **cognitive development** by encouraging children to categorize and reason about different roles in society, making the activity **meaningful** and **appropriately challenging** for preschoolers.

6. **Cultural and Linguistic Development:**

Social studies activities that celebrate diversity, culture, and language are crucial for fostering **cultural and linguistic development**. The plan should ensure that children have opportunities to learn about and respect cultural differences while connecting these experiences to their own lives.



Example

A **cultural exploration project** where children learn about different countries through books, music, and pictures, and then share their family's traditions. This encourages children to develop an appreciation for cultural diversity, making the experience **relevant** and **meaningful** by connecting social studies with personal and cultural experiences. The activity also ensures that children engage with the content in a way that is **challenging** but age-appropriate.

By aligning developmental domains with **social studies activities** for preschoolers, educators ensure that the learning experiences are **relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging**. These activities allow children to explore their environment, understand their roles in society, appreciate diversity, and build social, cognitive, language, and creative skills—all in a developmentally appropriate manner.

In the vignettes below, you will discover how a teacher implements the teaching cycle to plan relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging learning experiences.

Preschool Vignette: Exploring Our Neighborhood

Scenario: Ms. Lopez, a preschool teacher, observes that her students are curious about the different people and places in their neighborhood. During circle time, she decides to integrate a social studies activity that will help the children learn about their community and make connections to their daily lives.

Planning: Ms. Lopez plans a social studies activity centered around the theme "People in Our Neighborhood." She gathers a picture book titled "The Helpers in Our Neighborhood," which introduces various community helpers such as firefighters, police officers, and doctors. The book includes colorful illustrations and simple text that reflects the children's experiences.

Relevance and Meaningfulness: During story time, Ms. Lopez reads the book aloud to the children, emphasizing the different roles people play in keeping the neighborhood safe and clean. She pauses frequently to ask questions such as, "Who has seen a firefighter in your neighborhood?" and "What does a police officer do?" These questions help the children connect the story to their personal experiences. The children excitedly share their own encounters with community helpers, which deepens their understanding of the people who make their neighborhood work.

Appropriate Challenge: After the story, Ms. Lopez leads a group discussion. She invites the children to draw their favorite community helper. To make the activity developmentally appropriate, she offers different materials based on the children's fine motor abilities. Younger children are given simple shapes to cut out, while older children are encouraged to independently draw their community helpers. Some children choose to write the name of the helper they drew, while others label their pictures with the first letter of the helper's name.

As the children work, Ms. Lopez moves around the room, offering support. She challenges the children who are ready to explore further by asking them to describe what the helper does in a sentence, such as, "The doctor helps people feel better."

She provides extra assistance to children who need help with writing or creating their drawings.

Summary:
Through the activity, Ms. Lopez creates a meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging experience for her preschool students. By incorporating a familiar theme, she engages the children in a discussion about their community, helping them connect what they learn in the classroom to their everyday lives. The art activity provides a hands-on way for children to express what they've learned, with enough flexibility to meet each child's developmental needs. The following chart shows how the lesson aligns with the curriculum planning cycle.

Preschool Lesson Alignment with the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Preschool Lesson Alignment with the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Planning Cycle Step	Example from the Vignette	How it Aligns with the Cycle
Observation	Ms. Lopez observes children's curiosity about community helpers and places in the neighborhood.	Observation is about understanding children's interests and developmental levels, which helps inform lesson planning.
Documentation	Ms. Lopez listens to children's responses and encourages them to share personal encounters with community helpers.	Documentation tracks children's responses and helps assess their understanding, guiding future lessons.
Reflection	Ms. Lopez reflects on how well the children connected the concept of community helpers to their personal experiences.	Reflection evaluates how well the lesson engaged the children and whether it was appropriately challenging.
Planning	Ms. Lopez plans the lesson with a relevant book and an art activity, differentiating materials based on developmental levels.	Planning is based on observations and reflections to create an engaging, developmentally appropriate lesson.
Implementation	Ms. Lopez reads the book, leads a discussion, and guides children through a drawing activity, offering support as needed.	Implementation brings the plan to life in the classroom, providing experiential activities and support for individual needs.

Toddler Vignette: Exploring Community Helpers

Observation: Ms. Green, a toddler teacher, notices her students showing interest in the people and places around them, especially during outdoor playtime. They often point to cars, houses, and neighborhood buildings, and enjoy imitating their parents, such as carrying bags or waving hello to neighbors. To foster this curiosity, Ms. Green decides to create a social studies activity to help the toddlers understand more about their community and the people they interact with daily.

Planning: Ms. Green plans an activity focused on exploring the concept of community helpers. She gathers picture books featuring familiar community helpers, such as mail carriers, garbage collectors, and police officers. Additionally, she prepares large pictures and props (toy mailboxes, hats, and simple tools) to facilitate physical and social engagement during the lesson.

Relevance and Meaningfulness: Ms. Green begins the day by showing the toddlers a picture book titled *People Who Help Us* and discussing the roles of various community helpers. She points to images of familiar figures and asks questions like, “Who helps deliver your letters?” and “Who takes the trash away?” This discussion helps the children connect the lesson to their own lives, making it relevant and meaningful. Observing the children’s reactions and facial expressions, Ms. Green sees that they recognize many figures from their own experiences, enhancing the personal and engaging nature of the lesson.

Appropriate Challenge: After reading the book, Ms. Green invites the children to participate in a role-playing activity. She sets up a small play area where the children can act out being community helpers, such as sorting mail in a toy mailbox, picking up toy trash, or pretending to be a police officer directing traffic. Simple props like hats, small bags, and pretend tools are provided to encourage imaginative play.

Ms. Green differentiates the challenge based on the children’s developmental levels:

- For toddlers still developing fine motor skills, she encourages sorting large, colorful pieces of "mail" into a toy mailbox or handing out pretend letters.
- For more advanced toddlers, she encourages more active roles, such as pretending to pick up trash or guiding friends through an obstacle course as a “police officer.”

Toddler Lesson Alignment to the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Toddler Lesson Alignment to the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Planning Cycle Step	Example from the Lesson	How it Aligns with the Cycle
Observation	Ms. Green observes toddlers' curiosity about community helpers during outdoor playtime, noticing their interest in cars, houses, and neighbors.	Observation helps Ms. Green identify the children's interests and curiosity, which informs the choice of community helpers as the theme for the lesson.
Documentation	Ms. Green documents toddlers' engagement during outdoor play and the reactions they have when they see familiar community figures.	Documentation allows Ms. Green to track the children's engagement and understanding, helping to refine future activities.
Reflection	Ms. Green reflects on how well the toddlers recognized community helpers and connected them to their real-world experiences.	Reflection provides Ms. Green with insights into how the children connected the lesson to their own lives and what adjustments may be needed for further learning.
Planning	Ms. Green plans an activity focused on community helpers, gathering materials like picture books, props, and simple tools to encourage physical and social engagement.	Planning ensures that the activities are aligned with the children's developmental needs and interests, making the lesson relevant and engaging.
Implementation	Ms. Green reads the book, leads a discussion, and sets up role-playing activities where toddlers can act out community helper roles.	Implementation puts the plan into action, providing opportunities for the children to explore social roles through hands-on, imaginative play.

Infant Vignette: People Who Care for Me

Scenario: Ms. Lopez, an infant teacher, observes that her students are beginning to focus on familiar voices and faces, especially their caregivers. She notices that the babies respond positively when they hear their caregiver's voice or see familiar faces during their interactions. Ms. Lopez decides to create a lesson that introduces the infants to the important social concept of caregivers and their roles in providing security, care, and attachment.

Planning: Ms. Lopez plans a social studies activity centered around the theme "People Who Care for Me." She gathers sensory materials, such as baby-friendly images of caregivers (parents, teachers, and family members) and soft toys that represent social roles (e.g., caregiver and baby). She prepares to engage the babies with sensory exploration and simple interactions that will introduce them to their caregivers and begin building an understanding of relationships.

Relevance and Meaningfulness: During circle time, Ms. Lopez holds up pictures of familiar caregivers and gently talks to the babies about each person's role, saying their names and engaging in eye contact. She sings a simple song, "This Is My Family," while gently pointing to the babies' body parts, saying the names of caregivers or family members. Ms. Lopez uses tummy time to help the babies explore soft toys with images of caregivers and animals that represent social roles. These interactions allow the infants to begin associating voices, faces, and names with the concept of trusted people in their lives.

To reinforce these connections, Ms. Lopez places a soft mirror in front of the infants during playtime, encouraging them to explore self-recognition while also pointing to their caregivers in the mirror.

Appropriate Challenge: After the sensory exploration, Ms. Lopez introduces more tactile experiences by offering the babies familiar sensory objects, such as a small stuffed animal or a family photo. These objects are safe to explore and connect to their daily lives, helping them understand the concept of belonging and attachment.

Ms. Lopez observes the infants' engagement with the sensory materials, providing gentle guidance and emotional connection through touch and speech. She encourages self-awareness through mirror play, while also fostering attachment by offering comfort and security when interacting with the sensory objects.

To challenge the infants appropriately, Ms. Lopez differentiates the activities based on developmental abilities. For example, some infants may be more focused on simple sensory exploration, while others might show early signs of self-recognition or prefer looking at images of their caregivers.

Summary: Through this activity, Ms. Lopez creates a meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging experience for her infant students. By introducing the concept of caregivers and early social connections through sensory activities, she helps the babies start to form foundational ideas of attachment and social roles. The activities are gentle and developmentally appropriate, ensuring that each baby has the opportunity to engage at their own pace while also being supported to make connections with those who care for them. The lesson fosters security and understanding in a safe, nurturing environment, promoting social-emotional development and early cognitive growth.

Infant Lesson Alignment with the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Infant Lesson Alignment with the Curriculum Planning Cycle

Planning Cycle Step	Example from the Lesson	How it Aligns with the Cycle
Observation	Ms. Lopez observes that the infants respond to familiar voices and faces, particularly their caregivers.	The observation helps identify the infants' engagement levels and informs the design of sensory activities based on their reactions to familiar stimuli.

Planning Cycle Step	Example from the Lesson	How it Aligns with the Cycle
Documentation	Ms. Lopez notes which babies respond positively to their caregivers' voices, faces, or the song.	Documentation allows Ms. Lopez to track how each baby engages with the activities and which sensory materials are most engaging.
Reflection	Ms. Lopez reflects on the infants' ability to engage with the sensory materials and the level of attachment they demonstrate during activities.	Reflection provides insights into the effectiveness of the activities in fostering early social connections and attachment, guiding adjustments in future lessons.
Planning	Ms. Lopez plans a series of activities that include picture recognition, a simple song, tummy time with sensory objects, and mirror play.	Planning ensures that the activities are developmentally appropriate for infants, based on observations and reflections from previous lessons.
Implementation	Ms. Lopez implements the sensory exploration activities with gentle interactions, singing, and supporting the infants during tummy time and mirror play.	Implementation brings the planned activities to life, ensuring that infants engage with the material in a way that is nurturing and promotes early social understanding.

Conclusion

Creating learning experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging is fundamental to fostering children's development and engagement in early childhood education. By observing and understanding each child's interests, developmental stages, and individual needs, educators can design lessons that resonate with children's real-world experiences and cultural backgrounds. This approach makes learning more engaging and enjoyable and supports children's holistic development across multiple domains.

The principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), along with frameworks such as the Head Start Early Learning Framework and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), provide valuable guidance for educators. These frameworks emphasize the importance of creating integrated, relational, and culturally respectful learning experiences that cater to the diverse strengths and needs of each child.

Through careful observation, documentation, reflection, planning, and implementation, educators can continuously adapt their teaching strategies to meet the evolving needs of their students. By doing so, they create a supportive and empowering learning environment where children can thrive, develop a love for learning, and build strong connections with their community and the world around them.

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4.3: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Learning Experiences

In this chapter, we will look at the components of planning Social Studies Learning Experiences that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate.

First, let's review developmentally appropriate practice.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice is Informed by 3 Areas of Knowledge

When planning curriculum for children, we must be sure the activities are developmentally appropriate. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Position Statement, "The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in...intentionality, in the knowledge that practitioners consider when they are making decisions, and in their always aiming for goals that are both challenging and achievable for children." To do this, they must use developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). DAP includes three areas of knowledge:

1. **Age-Appropriateness** – using what is known about child development and learning in general. More specifically, this means: What is known about child development and learning: Knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and challenging to children.
2. **Individual-Appropriateness** – using what is known about each child as an individual to be responsive to each child. More specific examples of this include: What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each child in the group: [Necessary] to be able to adapt and be responsive to inevitable individual variation.
3. **Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness** – using what is known about the social and cultural context in which children live. This means: Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live: [Necessary] to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, 8–9)

Curriculum in Multicultural Classrooms

The term culturally responsive practices has been used to refer to the implementation of effective teaching practices in diverse early education settings. Culturally responsive practices are teaching to the individual needs of children who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. This term implies the integration of assessment and curriculum practices: program staff must learn about the individual abilities and preferences of each of the children enrolled in their program, and then find ways to plan and implement a curriculum that is based upon each child's needs and interests. For example, teachers can use home visits to learn about the child, to observe ways that families interact with their child, and to begin a dialogue with families about their goals for the child.

Classroom Materials

In her 1995 book, The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8, Martha Bronson offers detailed suggestions for selecting play materials that are safe, appropriate, and supportive of play and development. It is relevant to note here that classroom materials can potentially depict people in stereotypical ways or only contain simplified or inaccurate images of culturally diverse people. Therefore, the challenge is to provide classroom materials that reflect all children, families, and adults in the program, and to eliminate stereotypical or inaccurate materials from daily use. For example, books and dramatic play materials should reflect diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, special needs and abilities, and a range of occupations and ages. Books and environmental print should also represent the different languages of children in the classroom.



Figure 4.3.1: What diversity is represented in this image of children and dolls?

The challenge for programs is to establish systems and procedures that take the cultural and linguistic contexts of the children into account. Once in place, these classroom materials should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the classrooms reflect all enrolled children without stereotyping. Programs are encouraged to seek information from families and knowledgeable members of the community for their input in equipping classrooms to reflect cultures and languages in respectful ways.

Finally, encouraging children's language and cognitive growth does not preclude the responsibility to support each child's sense of well-being, the formation of his or her identity, and feelings of security. A consensus within the research is that effective environments for children support all domains of development, and that environments associated with learning outcomes should also provide strong support for social–emotional development (Hart & Risley 1995, 1999; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998).

With this in mind, the developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate environment mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the children it serves (Gestwicki 1995). The following are some specific strategies suggested by Derman Sparks (1989):

Suggested Strategies

1. Use images in abundance that represent all children, families, and staff in your program.
2. Use images of children and adults from the major ethnic groups in your community and in U.S. society.
3. Use images that accurately reflect people's current daily lives in the U.S. during work and recreational activities.
4. Offer a balance among different cultural and ethnic groups.
5. Provide a fair balance of images of women and men doing "jobs at home" and "jobs outside home." Provide images of older people of various backgrounds doing different activities.
6. Provide images of differently-abled people of various backgrounds at work and with their families.
7. Use images of diversity in family styles, such as single mothers and fathers, and extended families that are multiracial and multiethnic.
8. Use images of important individuals, past and present, that reflect diversity.
9. Exhibit artwork—prints, sculpture, and textiles—by artists of various backgrounds

Vignette

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Read-Aloud in Preschool – "Animals in Our Neighborhood"

Setting: A preschool classroom in a multicultural neighborhood where children come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Context: It's story time, and Mr. Kim, the preschool teacher, has chosen a book called "Animals in Our Neighborhood." The book features illustrations of different animals commonly found in urban, suburban, and rural areas, along with descriptions in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Korean.

Activity: Mr. Kim gathers the children on the rug, holding up the book so everyone can see the cover. "Today, we're going to read about the animals we might see around where we live," he begins. "But this book is special because it includes words in different languages, just like how we all speak different languages at home."

He opens the book to the first page, which features a squirrel sitting on a tree branch. The text reads, "This is a squirrel. It's called 'ardilla' in Spanish and '다람쥐' (daramjwi) in Korean." Mr. Kim reads the English text first, then pauses and repeats the words in Spanish and Korean.

"Does anyone here know what we call a squirrel in another language?" he asks. A boy named Mateo raises his hand and says, "In Spanish, we say 'ardilla'!" Mr. Kim nods approvingly, "That's right, Mateo! And in Korean, it's '다람쥐' (daramjwi). Let's all try saying these words together."

The children repeat the words after Mr. Kim, some giggling as they practice pronouncing "daramjwi." Mr. Kim smiles and encourages them, saying, "It's fun to learn new words, isn't it?"

As they move on to the next animal, a raccoon, Mr. Kim points out that raccoons are common in many neighborhoods, and he asks if anyone has ever seen one. A girl named Amara shares, "I saw one in my backyard last night!" Mr. Kim asks if anyone knows another name for a raccoon, and Amara adds, "My grandma calls it 'mapache' in Spanish."

Mr. Kim reads the description in the book, highlighting that "mapache" is the Spanish word for raccoon. He then asks if anyone knows what it's called in another language. A child named Jisoo says, "In Korean, it's '너구리' (neoguri)."

Throughout the read-aloud, Mr. Kim integrates these multilingual connections, inviting children to share the names of animals in their home languages. When they come across a deer in the book, a child named Fatima eagerly shares that in Arabic, it's called "غزال" (ghazal). Mr. Kim appreciates each contribution, helping the children feel proud of their linguistic heritage.

Reflection: After finishing the book, Mr. Kim leads a discussion about the animals in their own neighborhoods. He asks, "Which animals have you seen near your home? What do you call them in your language?"

The children take turns sharing their experiences, with Mr. Kim making sure to include and validate each child's language. He also encourages the children to ask their families about more animal names in their home languages and bring them back to share with the class.

Outcome: The read-aloud not only helps the children learn about the animals in their neighborhood but also celebrates the linguistic diversity in the classroom. By incorporating multiple languages and encouraging children to share their own, Mr. Kim fosters an inclusive environment where every child's culture and language are valued. The children leave story time with a sense of belonging and excitement to learn more about their peers' languages and experiences.

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In this chapter, we explore how to adapt social studies lessons to ensure they are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for young children. This chapter follows the foundational concepts covered in earlier chapters, where we reviewed key components such as the importance of developmental domains, effective transitions, and culturally responsive teaching. By applying these principles to the subject of social studies, we can create meaningful learning experiences that respect the children's diverse cultural backgrounds, developmental stages, and language experiences.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in Social Studies

Developmentally Appropriate Practice is crucial in designing lessons that meet children where they are developmentally, intellectually, and emotionally. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), developmentally appropriate practice includes three key areas of knowledge:

1. **Age-Appropriateness**: Recognizing that children develop at different rates and need learning experiences that are suitable

for their age and cognitive stage.
2. **Individual-Appropriateness**: Understanding and addressing the unique developmental needs, interests, and learning styles of each child. This ensures that activities are tailored to support individual progress.
3. **Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness**: Acknowledging the social and cultural contexts in which children live and ensuring that learning experiences are relevant and respectful of the children's backgrounds and family traditions.

This third area, **Social-and Cultural-Appropriateness**, is particularly important in social studies, as it directly influences how children understand and interact with concepts like community, roles, and relationships within different societal and cultural contexts.

Applying Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness in Social Studies

In social studies, it is essential to draw from the children's cultural backgrounds and integrate meaningful content that reflects their lived experiences. By recognizing the value of each child's culture, we can ensure that lessons are not only educational but also validating and empowering. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and respect for diversity, which is foundational to the field of social studies.

Classroom Materials for Culturally Responsive Social Studies

Classroom materials play a critical role in supporting the social and cultural appropriateness of social studies lessons. In multicultural classrooms, the materials used should represent a wide range of cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. This includes books and visuals, dolls and play figures, and community role-play materials.

Books and Visuals



Ensure that classroom books, posters, and other materials reflect diverse cultural groups, family structures, and community roles. Avoid materials that reinforce stereotypes or oversimplified portrayals of culture.

Dolls and Play Figures



Provide dolls and action figures representing a variety of ethnicities, family structures, and professions, so children can engage with diverse experiences.

Community Role Play



Materials such as costumes, props, and picture cards should represent various roles within the community, such as firefighters, doctors, teachers, and police officers, from different cultural perspectives.

By offering a balanced selection of classroom materials, educators can prevent the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes and instead promote a more accurate and inclusive representation of society.

Suggested Strategies for Culturally Responsive Social Studies

Here are some practical strategies for planning culturally responsive social studies activities that integrate developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness:

1. **Use Family Input**: Encourage family participation by learning about the child's home environment, family traditions, and cultural practices. This can be achieved through home visits, family surveys, or collaborative projects.
2. **Incorporate Multilingual Elements**: Introduce vocabulary from different languages and cultures. For example, when teaching about community helpers, include the names of professions in multiple languages spoken by the children in the classroom. This allows children to see the value of their own languages and the languages of their peers.
3. **Celebrate Cultural Events and Holidays**: Integrate cultural events and holidays into your lessons. Recognize not only national holidays but also holidays significant to different cultural groups in the classroom. Encourage children to share their family celebrations and traditions with the class.

4. **Use Diverse Perspectives**: When teaching about communities, include perspectives from various cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Use stories and case studies that represent a wide range of experiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.
5. **Build Community Connections**: Arrange activities where children learn about their own neighborhoods, including local businesses, community centers, and local government. Encourage them to ask questions and explore community roles through interviews with local figures such as police officers, firefighters, and shop owners.

Preschool Vignette: Exploring Our Neighborhood and Community Helpers



Setting

A preschool classroom in a multicultural neighborhood. The children, aged 3 to 5 years, speak English, Spanish, Somali, and Arabic. Ms. Lee is introducing the concept of community helpers and neighborhood roles.

Context

Ms. Lee plans to use social studies to help children understand the importance of community helpers and their roles within society. The activity will engage children in exploring their neighborhoods and the people who help them.

Developmental Goals

Cognitive Skills: Children understand roles within a community and how these roles help others.

Social Skills: Role-playing encourages cooperation and communication.

Language Development: Children learn community-related vocabulary in English and their home languages.

Cultural Awareness: Respecting each child's cultural background by discussing community helpers they are familiar with at home.

Activity

Ms. Lee gathers the children on the rug, displaying pictures of community helpers, such as firefighters, doctors, and police officers. She says:

"Today, we are going to learn about the people who help us in our neighborhoods! Who can tell me about someone who helps you in your neighborhood?"

The children respond eagerly with different answers, such as:

Liam (in English): "Firefighters!"

Zara (in Somali): "Dhakhtar!" (Doctor)

Mateo (in Spanish): "Maestra!" (Teacher)

Amira (in Arabic): "Mumarid!" (Nurse)

Ms. Lee praises each child's response, repeating the names in both English and their home languages.

Hands-on Exploration

Ms. Lee asks the children to role-play community helpers using props. She demonstrates how to act out being a firefighter, doctor, or teacher.

"Let's pretend to be doctors! Can we use our tools to help someone feel better?"

As the children participate in the role-playing, Ms. Lee encourages them to ask questions about the community helpers they are role-playing.

Cultural and Linguistic Integration

Ms. Lee asks the children about the community helpers they see in their homes or communities.

Ms. Lee to Amira: "Amira, who helps you at home?"

Amira (in Arabic): "My mom helps me with everything!"

Ms. Lee: "That's wonderful! Moms are always ready to help!"

Reflection and Sharing

After the activity, Ms. Lee gathers the children together to reflect on their favorite community helper.

"Which community helper did you enjoy pretending to be the most? Why?"

Liam (in English): "I like being the firefighter!"

Zara (in Somali): "I like being the doctor!"

Mateo (in Spanish): "I like being the teacher!"

Amira (in Arabic): "I like being the nurse!"

Outcome

By the end of the activity, the children have gained a deeper understanding of the roles of community helpers and their importance in society. They have practiced using community-related vocabulary in both English and their home languages, fostering language development. The role-playing activity has encouraged cooperation and communication among the children, enhancing their social skills. Additionally, the discussion of community helpers familiar to each child's cultural background has promoted cultural awareness and respect.

Toddler Vignette: Who Lives in Our Neighborhood?



Setting

A toddler classroom where children, aged 1 to 3 years, are introduced to basic community concepts.

Context

Ms. Sanchez introduces toddlers to the idea of community, focusing on the people they see around their homes and neighborhood.

Developmental Goals

Cognitive Skills: Toddlers begin to understand the idea of a community and the roles of different people.

Social Skills: The activity encourages toddlers to use social vocabulary in a group setting.

Language Development: Toddlers practice identifying and naming community-related items and people in both English and their home languages.

Activity

Ms. Sanchez shows pictures of neighborhood scenes and asks the children to name what they see.

"Can you see the doctor? Where does the dog live? Let's put the dog in the park!"

As the children interact with the pictures and toys, Ms. Sanchez provides gentle guidance.

Outcome

By the end of the activity, toddlers have started to grasp the concept of community and the roles of different people within it. They have practiced using social vocabulary in a group setting, enhancing their social skills. The activity has also supported language development by encouraging toddlers to identify and name community-related items and people in both English and their home languages. Overall, the activity has provided a foundation for understanding their neighborhood and the people who help them.

Infant Vignette: Exploring Our Family and Community



Setting

An infant classroom with babies aged 6 to 12 months, including children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds such as English, Spanish, Somali, and Arabic. The teacher, Ms. Nguyen, is facilitating an engaging activity designed to introduce the concept of family and community to the infants through simple, sensory-rich experiences that promote early social development.

Context

Ms. Nguyen aims to create an activity that introduces infants to the idea of family, community, and connection in a developmentally appropriate way. The focus is on sensory experiences that help build social and emotional awareness. This activity will engage infants in recognizing familiar faces, hearing words associated with family members, and experiencing the warmth of connection with caregivers and peers. The activity aligns with the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), Head Start ELOF, and WMELS.

Developmental Goals

Cognitive Skills: Infants begin to understand the idea of family and community through sensory experiences.

Social Skills: The activity encourages infants to engage with caregivers and peers, promoting early social development.

Language Development: Infants are exposed to words associated with family members in both English and their home languages.

Emotional Awareness: Sensory-rich experiences help infants build emotional connections with their caregivers and peers.

Activity

Ms. Nguyen begins by gathering the infants on a soft mat, where they can see pictures of family members, including images of parents, siblings, and caregivers, as well as pictures of community members such as neighbors and pets. She speaks softly as she holds up a large picture of a family smiling together.

"Look, everyone! Here is a picture of a family. Do you see the mommy and daddy?

Here is a baby, too. Babies like you!"

The infants look at the image with curiosity. Ms. Nguyen gently points to each family member in the picture, repeating the words in both English and the infants' home languages.

Ms. Nguyen (in English): "Here is mommy. And here is daddy. Can you see the baby?"

Ms. Nguyen (in Spanish): "Aquí está mamá. Y aquí está papá. ¿Puedes ver el bebé?"

Ms. Nguyen (in Somali): "Halkan waxaa ku jira hooyo. Iyo halkan waa aabe. Ma arki kartaa ilmaha?"

Ms. Nguyen (in Arabic): "هنا أمي. وهنا أبي. هل ترى الطفل؟"

As she speaks, she gently touches the infant's hands or points to their faces, reinforcing the connection between the words and the images.

Sensory and Emotional Engagement

Ms. Nguyen then brings out soft, plush family dolls that resemble the characters in the pictures. She gently places them in the infants' laps or lets them hold the dolls. She speaks softly:

"This is a mommy doll. This is a daddy doll. And this is a baby doll."

She encourages the infants to feel the soft fabric of the dolls.

Ms. Nguyen (in English): "Can you feel how soft the mommy is? Feel her hair. It's so soft, just like mommy's hugs!"

Ms. Nguyen (in Arabic): "هل تشعرون بنعومة دمية الأم؟ إنها ناعمة مثل عناق الأم!" (Can you feel how soft the mommy doll is? It's soft like mommy's hugs!)

Cultural and Linguistic Connections

Ms. Nguyen acknowledges the cultural diversity of the infants by using simple words from their home languages to reinforce the concept of family. For example, she introduces the word 'family' in each language:

Ms. Nguyen (in Somali): "This is your qoys (family)."

Ms. Nguyen (in Arabic): "هو هذا al-'aaila (family)."

Ms. Nguyen (in Spanish): "Esta es tu familia."

Ms. Nguyen (in English): "Home is where we live with our family, and where we feel safe."

Interactive Play

Ms. Nguyen then places a large mirror in front of the infants. She gently holds each infant in front of the mirror and says:

"Look, who do you see? That's you! You are part of your family!"

She encourages the infants to explore their reflection, promoting self-recognition, which is an important aspect of their early social-emotional development.

- Ms. Nguyen (in English): "You're looking at yourself! You are special, and you belong to a family."

- Ms. Nguyen (in Arabic): "أنت ترى نفسك! أنت جزء من عائلتك!" (You are looking at yourself! You are part of your family!)

Reflection and Emotional Connection

As the activity draws to a close, Ms. Nguyen gently picks up each infant and cuddles them, softly speaking the names of family members.

"You are part of a big family that loves you, and they take care of you. Do you know who loves you the most? Mommy and daddy!"

Outcome

By the end of the activity, the infants have experienced a sensory-rich introduction to the concept of family and community. They have been exposed to both visual and tactile representations of family members, while also hearing familiar words in their home languages. This activity fosters early social-emotional development, as the infants begin to recognize their connection to their families and gain a sense of self through the mirror. It also supports language development by introducing new words and phrases in a meaningful, interactive way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in early childhood education is essential for fostering an inclusive, respectful, and effective learning environment. By applying Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) and incorporating culturally responsive strategies, educators can create meaningful social studies lessons that honor children's diverse backgrounds and developmental needs. Through intentional use of materials, family engagement, and language inclusion, teachers can nurture children's understanding of their communities and cultures. These strategies not only support cognitive and social development but also encourage a sense of belonging and respect for diversity, setting the foundation for lifelong learning and empathy.

Social and Emotional Development

Learning Objectives

By the end of the chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain how social-emotional development lays the foundation for and is interrelated with all other domains and areas of development
- Describe the foundations in social and emotional development that high-quality early childhood programs support
- Discuss how the environment contributes to children’s social and emotional development
- Identify ways educators can support children’s social and emotional development
- Summarize ways to engage families in the curriculum for social and emotional development

Social-emotional development indicates how preschool children acquire the social skills, self-awareness, and personal qualities that are interconnected with learning in a classroom. Why is social-emotional development important to early learning?

- Many social-emotional qualities—such as curiosity, self-confidence as a learner, self-control of attention, thinking, and impulses, and initiative in developing new ideas—are essential to learning at any age. Learning, problem solving, and creativity rely on these social-emotional and motivational qualities as well as basic cognitive skills.
- When learning occurs in groups, such as in preschool classrooms or family child care programs, the social environment significantly influences how learning occurs. When young children enjoy interacting with adults and other children, they are more enthusiastic about activities and participate more.
- The interest and enthusiasm of others fuel the child’s own excitement about learning, and children are also motivated by others’ acknowledgment of the child’s accomplishments.
- Children who have been reported as having the greatest difficulties in learning are hindered by the lack of social-emotional qualities more than by academic concepts.
- The developing brain is not neatly divided into separate areas governing learning, thinking, and emotions. Instead, it is a highly interconnected organ with different regions influencing and being affected by the others. This means, for example, that young children who experience emotional challenges (perhaps because of stress) are less ready for learning because the brain regions related to memory are being affected by other regions governing emotion.



Figure 4.3.2: Working constructively with a peer takes a lot of social skills.

Pause to Reflect

What is your reaction to the importance of social and emotional development to children's learning? Did you already know this information? Do you think most people are aware of this?

Early learning is supported by attention to social-emotional development. Rather than taking time away from activities promoting learning and thinking, attention to the development of self, social interactions, and relationships is an essential component of an early childhood curriculum designed to promote learning in all young children. Here are some guiding principles on how to do that:

- Support social-emotional development with intentionality and ample opportunities to practice skills
- Attend to the impact of overall program design on social-emotional development (how you group children, what you model, etc.)
- Utilize curriculum practices that support healthy social-emotional development, including:
  - Allow many opportunities for practicing social interaction and relationship skills
  - Provide support for the growth of age and developmentally appropriate self-regulation abilities
  - Encourage curiosity and initiative
  - Provide each child with a network of nurturing, dependable adults who will actively support and scaffold his or her learning in a group setting
- The most effective approach is play-based active learning

Here are some additional strategies to support children's social and emotional development:

- Create a program environment and daily routines that offer children opportunities for responsible and cooperative roles in the classroom or family child care community.
- Model desirable behavior and attitudes in interactions with children and other adults.
- Use the family culture to create bridges between the program and the home, supporting children's pride in their family experience and understanding individual differences in background and viewpoint.
- Enlist adults as active co-explorers in children's chosen activities.
- Encourage children's ideas, initiative, and contributions to shared activities.
- Attentively observe children as they play to understand each child's needs, interests, strengths, and areas of growth in social-emotional development.
- Establish developmentally and culturally appropriate expectations for children's behavior, especially expectations for self-control and self-regulation.
- Narrate for children what they are observed doing and expressing, providing language to describe their thoughts and feelings, and to clarify others' feelings.
- Provide specific feedback to children about their efforts, reinforcing their choices that support learning and linking their actions to outcomes.
- Coach and guide children's behavior by using positive, respectful phrasing and tone to prompt problem solving and to give brief instructions and reminders.
- Help children understand social cues (facial expressions, body language, tone of voice). This can be fostered by simply

allowing the children to freely play with their peers (learning through experience), or by modeling your thought processes by thinking out loud ("I wonder what it means when Hayden is crying?")



Figure 4.3.3: Children's emotions sometimes look like this. But with adult support, they can learn to self-regulate.

The physical environment provides young children with expectations for behavior. When educators are mindful of the aesthetics, organization, and function of each area in the space, challenging behavior is likely to decrease while constructive, cooperative behavior increases.

A program's vision for learning and philosophy of care dictate how an environment is designed. For example, if the curriculum is based on the view that children are competent directors of their learning, educators develop a physical setting and activities that reflect children's emerging interests and provide easy access to meaningful play materials. Shelves for manipulatives and other materials are near the floor where children can easily reach them. Special areas in the room are designed for individual, small-group, and larger-group interactions. Play materials and other materials are carefully selected to reflect children's emerging interests, as observed in the context of play and conversation. In this environment, adult-child interactions can expand children's questions and comments.

High-quality learning environments set the stage for social-emotional exploration and growth. When children are presented with a warm, inviting, and culturally familiar environment, they feel comfortable and secure. The attractive spaces adults prepare for children communicate expectations of responsibility and cooperative care (we all play in and care for this beautiful place together).



Figure 4.3.4: This classroom sends clear messages about how children are to play with the materials and each other.

Preparing a variety of learning areas with open-ended materials encourages each child to participate in meaningful play experiences that match their temperaments and abilities. Incorporating elements from the home creates an atmosphere of community while simultaneously acknowledging the presence of individuals.

A physical environment that supports social-emotional learning has the following characteristics:

- Challenging and developmentally appropriate materials
- An ample supply of materials
- Appropriately sized small-group activities
- A variety of small-group activities within a range of adult supervision
- Aesthetically appealing
- Spaces to be with others *and* spaces to be alone
- Furnishings and materials accessible to children
- Displays of children's work
- Space for children's belongings
- Reflective of diversity
- Space for arrivals and departures
- Supportive of children's active engagement
- Outdoor areas supportive of social-emotional development

Just as the physical environment helps young children successfully meet the social-emotional demands of the curriculum, so, too, does the design of the daily schedule. Young children are better able to manage themselves and their relationships when daily routines and activities are predictable, transitions are signaled and supported, and there is a balance between relatively active and relatively quiet play and between group and individual activities. In the sections that follow, strategies to support social-emotional development are described in detail.

Helping Children Cope with Stress

Teachers in an early childhood education program are often the first people outside the family to become aware that a young child may be experiencing overwhelming stress. They may notice a child who reacts with uncharacteristic aggression to a peer's comment that would not bother another child, or they may notice that a child has become unusually quiet and withdrawn lately. Young children convey their stress in individualized ways: some are emotionally over-reactive, while others are emotionally over-controlled; some become clingy, others withdrawn; some become provocative and defiant. A common characteristic is that young children under stress exhibit a marked change from their ordinary behavior. They often lose their capacity for competence and self-control that they previously had. When teachers observe these changes in a child, it can be helpful to consult with parents to discover whether recent events have created challenges that children are having difficulty managing. Often, these challenges arise from within the family.

How can teachers assist young children under stress? One of the most important things they can do is provide the child with a predictable, safe haven where children can feel secure. Teachers can create a comfortable and comforting everyday routine that is child-centered, individualized, responsive, and helpfully structured to give young children a sense of control and predictability that may be lacking in other aspects of the child's life. Central to these efforts is providing children with supportive adult relationships that are reliable and helpful. This may be more difficult than one would expect because young children under stress often test these relationships to see whether teachers and other adults will remain responsive to them even when children act defiantly or negatively.



Figure 4.3.5: A teacher who cares makes a difference.

In some circumstances, it can be helpful for teachers to obtain the advice of an early childhood mental health consultant who can observe the child in the classroom, talk with the teacher about the child's behavior, and suggest strategies for providing supportive assistance. Early childhood mental health consultants can be valuable resources to an early childhood education program. They can help teachers provide much-needed support to young children who may not have other such sources of support elsewhere in their lives.

Pause to Reflect

What environments make you feel most socially and emotionally competent? How do you deal with your stress? Why should you be thinking about those things as a teacher?

The domain of social-emotional development encompasses three areas or strands:

- self
- social interaction
- relationships

Supporting Children's Developing Self

Early learning deeply engages the self. Most preschool children approach learning opportunities with enthusiasm and self-confidence, excited by the prospect of a new discovery. Their successes (and occasional failures) shape their sense of what they can do and sometimes drive their efforts to acquire new skills. Their achievements and occasional disappointments also provoke the responses of others—adults and peers—that further influence children's self-concept and self-confidence. Young children value learning for themselves because it is valued by the people who matter to them.

In a preschool program, learning is a social activity. Therefore, preschool children's success in learning depends on their capacity to understand and participate constructively in the social environment. Early childhood is a period of rapid growth in social and emotional understanding in which the children's capacity for empathy and caring is also developing. This is also a period of growth in self-regulation as young children are acquiring skills for sustaining their attention, focusing their thinking and problem-solving, managing their behavioral impulses, and controlling their emotions. Even so, lapses in self-regulation are as apparent as young children's successes, and developmentally appropriate expectations for children's self-control are essential.



Figure 4.3.6: This group of children is working together, with their teacher, to connect these pieces.

Therefore, a thoughtfully designed preschool curriculum that supports social-emotional development devotes considerable attention to the direct and indirect ways that children's classroom experiences shape the development of self.

The foundations for Self include those for self-awareness, self-regulation, social and emotional understanding, empathy and

caring, and initiative in learning:

Self

1.0 Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Describe their physical characteristics, behavior, and abilities positively.	4.1 Compare their characteristics with those of others and display a growing awareness of their psychological characteristics, such as thoughts and feelings.

2.0 Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.2 Need adult guidance in managing their attention, feelings, and impulses, and show some effort at self-control.	2.1 Regulate their attention, thoughts, feelings, and impulses more consistently, although adult guidance is sometimes necessary.

3.0 Social and Emotional Understanding

Social and Emotional Understanding Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.3 Seek to understand people's feelings and behavior, notice diversity in human characteristics, and are interested in how people are similar and different.	4.1 Begin to comprehend the mental and psychological reasons people act as they do and how they contribute to differences between people.

4.0 Empathy and Caring

Empathy and Caring Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.4 Demonstrate concern for the needs of others and people in distress.	4.2 Respond to another's distress and needs with sympathetic caring, and are more likely to assist.

5.0 Initiative in Learning

Initiative in Learning Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.5 Enjoy learning and are confident in their abilities to make new discoveries, although, may not persist at solving difficult problems.	4.3 Take greater initiative in making new discoveries, identifying new solutions, and persisting in trying to figure things out.

Teachers can support children's development of the Self with the following:

- Provide ample space, use child-sized shelves and furnishings, and adapt materials to make all learning areas and activities accessible
- Designate learning areas to help children select preferred sites for exploration
- Place active play zones away from quiet areas to better support children in their choices for play
- Make use of adaptive tools and play materials to help the autonomous exploration of children with special needs
- Attentively observe individual children during a variety of activities
- Incorporate artwork and play materials that reflect children's home cultures
- Describe aloud for children observations of what they do and express as they play, explore, and participate in group activities
- Compare aloud children's past and present abilities as you observe them
- Give specific feedback to children about their efforts
- Use planned activities and children's observations to draw attention to people's similarities and differences, including preferences and feelings
- Set up opportunities to practice problem-solving with children who have not yet developed those skills
- Use appropriately stimulating aesthetic elements such as soothing colors, natural woods and fibers, and soft textures
- Eliminate or reduce background noise to help children attend to what you want them to hear
- Model behavior and attitudes that are warm, respectful, and caring
- Maintain developmentally appropriate expectations for preschool children's behavior
- Guide and coach children's behavior
- Prompt and guide desired behavior
- Reinforce children's good choices and link their actions to positive outcomes
- Provide a consistent but flexible daily routine
- Alternate between active and quiet activities
- Time group experiences to match children's developing attention spans, social skills, and self-control
- Introduce children to relaxation exercises
- Plan developmentally appropriate transitions
- Play games with rules periodically to help children learn to focus their attention and regulate their impulses to achieve a goal
- Observe the levels of social and emotional understanding that children already have
- Label the emotions people express and communicate with children about what may be provoking those feelings
- Discuss characteristics openly and answer their questions about differences, being thoughtful to counter stereotypes by using concrete examples
- Make use of the experiences and emotions of characters in stories
- Acknowledge and express appreciation for children's empathic responses
- Encourage empathy and caring for the natural world, including plants and animals
- Model curiosity and enthusiasm when you learn new things
- Engage in play and exploration with children instead of simply supervising their activities
- Provide ample time for free exploration, scheduling play and exploration periods of at least one uninterrupted hour at a time
- Help children generate ideas for solving problems they encounter
- Model persistence during challenging tasks; explaining that unsuccessful attempts to do something are not failures, but simply steps toward learning what will work



Figure 4.3.7: Careful planning will ensure that group times are just the right length.

Pause to Reflect

There were a lot of strategies listed for teachers to help support children's developing sense of self. What are the top five that stood out to you? Are there any that you are unsure about?

Vignettes

A child in a wheelchair enters the housekeeping area, where three children are pretending to be a family. They have dishes on the table and dolls in the doll bed. The child in the wheelchair moves closer to the table and tries to join the play, but cannot get close enough. After a few minutes, one of the children takes some dishes and puts them on the wheelchair tray. The two children play together. Mr. Luke comments, "I like your idea to use Andy's tray as a table."

Chloe cries in Ms. Julia's arms. Ms. Julia pats her back softly and communicates soothingly. "It sounds like that hurt. You can tell Paz you don't like that. Say, 'I don't like that, Paz.'" Chloe tucks her injured arm in toward Ms. Julia's body, shakes her head slowly side to side, and looks out warily at Paz. Paz stands close with her head lowered. "Chloe is upset because you pinched her arm. It hurt her quite a bit. Is there something you think we could do to help her feel better, Paz?" asks Ms. Julia.

Paz responds softly, "Sorry, Chloe," and reaches forward to hug Chloe.

Chloe whimpers and clings more closely to Ms. Julia. "When a friend is hurt, giving a hug often helps. I guess Chloe isn't ready for a hug right now. Thank you for trying, Paz. Maybe we can ask her again later."

Supporting Children's Social Interaction

Group learning always involves social interaction. The ease and skill with which children interact with adults and peers (in a preschool classroom or family child care program) and the competence with which they assume their roles and responsibilities as group members significantly influence how they learn. The development of these skills in the preschool years is a foundation for children's capacity to be socially skilled and competent classroom members in the primary grades.

For some children, unfortunately, difficulties in social interaction, because children are timid and inhibited, are aggressive or disruptive, struggle with being cooperative, or have physical or behavioral characteristics that often result in them being excluded, can pose significant obstacles to benefiting from social interactions with adults and peers. For them and all children, attention to social interaction skills can be a significant contribution to preschool children's learning in early childhood classrooms.



Figure 4.3.8: This teacher stays close to support children as they navigate the problem-solving of both the computer program and working together.

A thoughtfully designed preschool curriculum that supports social-emotional development devotes considerable attention, therefore, to the direct and indirect ways that classroom experiences shape the growth of children's social interaction skills. This includes interactions with adults, peers, and in groups, as well as cooperation and responsibility.

1.0 Interactions with Familiar Adults

Interactions with Familiar Adults Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Interact with familiar adults comfortably and competently, especially in familiar settings.	1.1 Participate in longer and more reciprocal interactions with familiar adults and take greater initiative in social interaction.

2.0 Interactions with Peers

Interactions with Peers Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Interact easily with peers in shared activities that occasionally become cooperative efforts.	2.1 More actively and intentionally cooperate with one another.
2.2 Participate in simple sequences of pretend play.	2.2 Create more complex sequences of pretend play that involve planning, coordination of roles, and cooperation.

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.3 Seek assistance in resolving peer conflict, especially when disagreements have escalated into physical aggression.	2.3 Negotiate with each other, seeking adult assistance when needed, and increasingly use words to respond to conflict. Disagreements may be expressed with verbal taunting in addition to physical aggression.

3.0 Group Participation

Group Participation Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Participate in group activities and are beginning to understand and cooperate with social expectations, group rules, and roles.	3.1 Participate positively and cooperatively as group members.

4.0 Cooperation and Responsibility

Cooperation and Responsibility Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.1 Seek to cooperate with adult instructions, but their capacities for self-control are limited, especially when they are frustrated or upset.	4.1 Have growing capacities for self-control and are motivated to cooperate to receive adult approval and think approvingly of themselves.

Teachers can support children's development of the social interaction foundations with the following:

- Get to know and create a warm and secure relationship with each child
- Be at the child's level as much as possible
- Initiate conversations with children about their activities and experiences
- Describe what you see children doing with comments or questions that they can respond to
- Provide specific feedback to children about their efforts instead of general words of praise
- Show respect for cultural differences in your expectations of adult–child communication
- Encourage children to see familiar adults as resources and become comfortable asking for help and support
- Model effective and respectful interaction by joining pairs or groups of children as they play and work together
- Incorporate play materials that promote and encourage peer play
- Suggest extensions for children's cooperative play

- Coach young children, step by step, as they learn conflict resolution skills
- Use books, puppet stories, and group discussions to reinforce children's social interaction skills
- Plan for project work, based on children's emerging interests, in pairs and small groups
- Plan large-group gatherings with flexibility
- Rehearse and prompt desired responses
- Acknowledge positive choices
- Build a sense of community through planned group experiences
- Arrange spaces for focused small-group work and effective large-group meetings
- Be thoughtful about group sizes
- Prepare materials ahead of time
- Incorporate nonverbal prompts to remind children of routines and expectations
- Ensure that adult expectations for children's behavior are developmentally appropriate
- Move beyond rules to expectations to emphasize guiding principles or values
- Enlist children's participation in creating examples of school or classroom expectations
- Focus on building a sense of classroom community
- Refer children to each other, instead of to an adult, for assistance to facilitate connections



Figure 4.3.9: How do you think these children are going to navigate this conflict of wanting the same thing?

As children mature, they can better understand the perspectives of other people and can negotiate more constructively with peers to resolve conflicts.

Table 4.3.1: Developmental Sequence of Conflict Negotiation

Level	Description of Level
Beginning level	Children can express to each other (using words, actions, or facial expressions) their desires, but adults need to provide ideas for resolving disputes.
Next level	Children begin to use appropriate words and actions to express their perspectives and desires to each other and seek adults' help during disputes.
Next level	Children not only express their own needs and desires to each other during a conflict, but can also suggest simple solutions based on their own perspectives.
Mature or proficient level	Children can consider each other's perspectives when there is a disagreement and can suggest and agree on some mutually acceptable solutions.

Vignettes

Ju-Hye paints her palms and fingers with a rainbow of colors. With focused concentration, she slowly pushes her palm onto a piece of paper where she has already painted a "stem." She lifts up her hand quickly. Ju-Hye smiles widely and then picks up her paper to show Ms. Betty, who is playing on the floor with two babies. Ms. Betty looks up and responds with a grin: "You finished your flower. You worked hard at mixing colors to make the color of green you wanted for your stem."

Lucas stands close to his caregiver, Ms. Mai, who is sitting in the block area. Ms. Mai observes Lucas watching his peers at play as they build a large train. "This train is getting really big," she comments to Lucas with a soft smile and a gentle hand on his back. Lucas nods his head slowly. "I wonder if Martin needs a helper. He said he is the engineer, but an engineer needs a conductor. Would you like to hand out and collect tickets?"

Lucas nods his head again and reaches for Ms. Mai's hand as she gets up to move closer to the train. Ms. Mai provides Lucas with her hand and another reassuring smile. "You could let Martin know you want to help. Tell Martin, 'I can collect the tickets.'"

Lucas pauses and then mumbles (or signs), "Martin, I can collect tickets."

"You all look like you are having fun over here. Lucas wants to help, too. Where are the tickets for Lucas to pass out to your riders?" restates Ms. Mai.

"Oh! Over there," responds Martin, pointing over to the basket of torn pieces of paper.

"Thanks, Martin, for your help. Lucas, let's go get the tickets and hand them to our friends. I think these builders will want to fill the train with passengers," observes Ms. Mai excitedly.

Pause to Reflect

One of the most challenging aspects of caring for and educating groups of young children can be helping them develop socially appropriate ways to express themselves and get their needs met. How skilled do you feel you would be in helping children develop conflict resolution skills? Why?

Supporting Children's Relationships

Relationships shape young children's learning. From infancy, parent–child and family relationships guide and motivate children's love for discovery and learning and provide a secure foundation for the growth of exploration and self-confidence. In the classroom, special adults and friends make preschool an inviting place for children. The teacher is a bridge for the child, connecting her to relationships at home and in the classroom. Young children's close relationships contribute in concert to the growth of early learning.



Figure 4.3.10: These children are proud of the structure they built with blocks.

Relationships

1.0 Attachment to Parents

Attachment to Parents Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Seek security and support from their primary family attachment figures.	1.1 Take greater initiative in seeking support from their primary family attachment figures.
1.2 Contribute to maintaining positive relationships with their primary family attachment figures.	1.2 Contribute to positive cooperation with their primary family attachment figures.
1.3 After experience with out-of-home care, manage departures and separations from primary family attachment figures with the teacher's assistance.	1.3 After experiencing out-of-home care, comfortably depart from their primary family attachment figures. Also, maintain well-being while apart from primary family attachment figures during the day.

2.0 Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers

Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Seek security and support from their primary teachers and caregivers.	2.1 Take greater initiative in seeking the support of their primary teachers and caregivers.
2.2 Contribute to maintaining positive relationships with their primary teachers and caregivers.	2.2 Contribute to positive cooperation with their primary teachers and caregivers.

3.0 Friendships

Friendships Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Choose to play with one or two special peers whom they identify as friends.	3.1 Friendships are more reciprocal, exclusive, and enduring.

Teachers can support children's development of relationships with the following:

- Establish a warm and collaborative relationship with each child's family
- Talk with children regularly about their families
- Create predictable arrival and departure routines
- Communicate frequently with family members about children's preschool activities, progress, and any concerns you have
- Build and maintain a pattern of warm, nurturing interactions with each child
- Encourage child–adult collaboration in learning
- Plan a program that offers choices of activities and associations with peers
- Provide spaces in the classroom that only accommodate two or three children
- Use ongoing observations to inform your social structuring of experiences
- Use books, puppet plays, and group discussions to identify and reinforce friendship skills
- Communicate with children's families about their preschool friendships and encourage out-of-school contact with school friends, if possible [20]



Figure 4.3.11: Supporting relationships like this one is an important part of an early educator's work

Vignettes

Tanya eagerly comes through the front door and greets caregiver Natalya with her news: "Ms. Natalya, we went to the fair last night, and I got to pet goats and sheeps and chickens, except Papa said to stay back from the ducks, because they have bills that can bite you fast!"

Ms. Natalya knelt down, and Tanya reached out to her. "Wow, Tanya! You sound really excited about your night at the fair. Did your whole family go, Grandpa too?" she asked, looking at Tanya's papa, who had accompanied her to the family child care home. Mr. Terebkov smiled and nodded, responding that it had been an enjoyable but late night for all of them. Ms. Natalya prompted Tanya to hug Papa goodbye, and then Tanya reached for Ms. Natalya's hand as they moved together into the play area. Ms. Natalya asked Tanya more about her favorite part of the county fair.

"No, you're not!" shouts Michelle. "Yes, I am! I'm the Mommy!" screams Lily.

"Well, you are a Silly Pilly. You're not my friend anymore," counters Michelle, standing with her hands on her hips and a scowl on her face.

At Michelle's words, Lily's lip begins to quiver. Tears form in her eyes as she yells, "I am your friend! I am!"

Miss Sandra moves over to the confrontation, kneels between the girls, and says with concern, "You both look really upset. Something is wrong. Can you tell me what is happening?"

"She said I am not her friend!" exclaims Lily, trying to overcome her tears.

"She is being a mean-y pants. I don't like her," says Michelle.

"It sounds like both of you have hurt feelings. Being friends with someone means that sometimes we disagree, and we get mad or sad. It sounds like that is happening right now. What can we do?"

"I am going to play with David," huffs Michelle as she marches off.

Lily leans into Miss Sandra. Miss Sandra considers what she knows about each child's temperament before responding: "It's tricky sometimes with friends. Why don't we take a little break from playing with Michelle? I'll bet she will be ready to play later when you are both feeling better." Miss Sandra helps Lily get involved in a new activity and then makes a mental note to check with each child's parent at departure time.

Pause to Reflect

Separating from parents is challenging for both children and families. How can you support children and the adults with whom they are attached through this transition? Some of the strategies above are a great starting place.

Engaging Families

Teachers can make the following suggestions to families to facilitate their support of the visual and performing arts for their children:

- Share stories about when they were babies and the ways they have grown and changed.
- Share ideas about the many ways people can be the same and different.
- Model constructive coping strategies when frustrated.
- Wonder aloud about how characters in a book might be feeling and why.
- Help children find a balance between vigorous activity and calm and focused times.
- Have conversations with children about things they are thinking, planning, and doing.
- Encourage children to work out a disagreement with a sibling or friend by suggesting to each other ideas for solving the problem. Remind children to consider each other's needs and feelings as they choose a solution to try. Stay close by to help children as they practice using words to resolve a conflict.
- Ask children for help with household chores or projects. Discuss, while working together, some things each person can do to help the family.
- Emphasize to children the family's values about such things as cooperation, teamwork, good manners, and kindness toward other people.
- Start a special good-bye ritual to use with a preschool child every day. A predictable routine is reassuring and makes the transition easier.
- Find at least a few minutes every day to spend as special time with each child (read a book, run an errand, complete a chore together, etc.
- Recognize that opportunities out of school to play with other children build positive social skills.



Figure 4.3.12: Books are a wonderful way to share examples and create discussion about social and emotional development. (Your Village is licensed by CC BY-3.0)

Conclusion

The heart of a curriculum that nurtures children's social-emotional development is play. A play-based, active learning approach allows many opportunities for practicing social interaction and relationship skills. It provides support for the growth of age- and developmentally appropriate self-regulation abilities. It encourages children's own curiosity and initiative. Finally, play in a well-planned early learning program provides each child with a network of nurturing, dependable adults who will actively support and scaffold their learning in a group setting.



Figure 4.3.13: Play provides opportunities for children to practice their developing social skills (Community Playthings is used with permission)

To be effective in accomplishing early learning goals, an active, play-based program must allow children to freely choose and pursue interests and activities, both alone and with others. It must encourage them to translate their own thoughts, ideas, and preferences into new activities and experiments. It must give them access to these opportunities for activity and exploration in a thoughtfully planned environment for a substantial portion of each preschool day. And most importantly, it must be planned and led by teachers who actively participate as co-explorers in children's chosen activities. In this context, play is essential and is enhanced if materials are available to encourage creativity and problem solving, and if teachers are attentive to the social interactions that surround children's play. This active, enthusiastic engagement of children and adults together in a learning

community can lead to dramatic growth in children's social-emotional understandings and competencies and their readiness for the challenges of school.

History and Social Science

Learning Objectives

By the end of the section, you should be able to: Explain how history and social sciences are appropriate to plan for in early childhood education programs.

- Describe the foundations in history and social science that high-quality early childhood education programs support
- Discuss how the environment supports children's understanding and participation in history and social science
- Identify ways educators can support children's engagement in and understanding of history and social science.
- Summarize ways to engage families in the curriculum for history and social science.

For many educators of young children, the terms history and social sciences conjure up images of children studying past presidents, learning about other countries, and exploring related topics during the primary school years. Yet, a look at young children's emerging sense of identity, their growing interest in the larger social world in which they live, and their developing understanding of time and place shows that history and social sciences are relevant to them also.



Figure 4.3.14: Early childhood education programs are Social Science in action.

Young children are natural historians when they talk about their experiences and enjoy hearing family stories of "long ago." They are intuitive geographers when they recognize the route to the grocery store and create a map of the preschool room. Children are simple ecologists when they worry about a plant that is wilted or a bird's egg on a nature walk. They learn about democracy through their participation in shared decision-making and taking turns on the playground. Their interactions with other children acquaint them with the diversity in culture, languages, backgrounds, and abilities in society. Young children are also everyday economists as they begin to understand how money, bartering, and exchange work in the world around them.

Preschoolers' understanding of history and social sciences naturally derives from their expanding knowledge of the world and their place in it. It also provides a foundation for the study of history, culture, geography, economics, civics and citizenship, ecology, and the global environment that begins in the primary grades and continues throughout life. Those topics are important because they provide a basis for understanding the responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society, the legacy of past generations who built society, the importance of caring for the natural world, and the rich diversity of other people.

In preschool, they are introduced to these important issues through everyday activities such as caring for a plant, remembering a recent trip to the zoo, deciding as a group on a name for the class pet, creating a shoe store, engaging in imaginative play with adult roles, or sharing family traditions from home. In other words, young children learn about history and social sciences from personal experiences, as they are enrolled in a preschool curriculum, and also from their experiences at home.

A thoughtfully designed early childhood program includes many activities that contribute to children's understanding of history and social sciences. Some activities are carefully planned by a teacher to help children learn about weather patterns, bartering for goods and services, responsibilities as a class member, adult occupations, and many other ideas and concepts. Other activities emerge from the opportunities created by children's spontaneous interests and a teacher's capacity to build these into teachable moments. Taken together, they reflect the assumption that young children develop knowledge of history and the social sciences as they are encouraged to enact their understanding in everyday interactions with other children and adults. This knowledge helps young children understand themselves in a wonderfully expanding world. Here are some guiding principles on how to help children gain this knowledge.

- Build a cooperative, inclusive preschool community by ensuring that the curriculum maximizes children's opportunities to work together in ways that require responsible conduct, fairness, and respect for others.
- Create activities that will actively engage children's social skills and understanding.
- Affirm children's home cultures, experiences, and values.
- Build on preschool children's natural interest in their social world, and in the similarities and differences among the people in it.
- Model social behavior and attitudes with explanations.
- Actively teach and practice the essential skills of democratic participation.
- Encourage children to incorporate their knowledge of adult roles and occupations into their dramatic play.
- Observe and converse with children during play to learn about their current understanding of time and history.
- Help children deepen their sense of place.
- Nurture children's sense of wonder about nature.



Figure 4.3.15: Part of good citizenship, even in preschool, is using your voice to vote

When planning an environment to support children's learning in history and social science, effective teachers consider the physical, curricular, and social elements. The physical environment and daily routine set the stage for children's inquiry and should include ample time for children's self-initiated work, different spaces for solitary play and for collaborative play, and engaging materials that children are encouraged to use creatively. The curricular plan needs to provide opportunities and adult support for both group learning and informal discovery and skill development. The key to a positive social environment is a teacher who actively models curiosity, openness, and engagement and who is eager to explore the world together with children. An environment that supports children's learning in history and the social sciences has the following characteristics:

- Extended projects that are centered on a topic in history or social science and emerge from children's interests and inquiries
- Reflective of diversity, as opposed to a tourist approach, teachers and children participate in authentic experiences with culture
- A balance between child choice and adult direction
- A variety of materials to support children's inquiry-based learning and practice in the skills of social science
- Materials that connect children to times and places
- Real experiences with nature and other environmental education materials
- Tools and practices for appreciating and caring for the Earth and its resources
- Display of children's work and experiences
- Dramatic play props and materials that represent firsthand experience with social roles and occupations, as well as consumer actions
- High-quality children's books with content related to self, family, and community

- Extension of learning into the local community to help children learn in the “here and now” of the world around them
- Family involvement in program planning that is inclusive of community goals and values

Research Highlight – Anti-bias Curriculum Approach

High-quality early childhood programs support children in developing their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional potential. The settings encourage children to explore their sense of self and to develop an awareness and appreciation of others. Such experiences are foundational to becoming positive and constructive members of society and the world.

Creating an inclusive community of learners—one in which all individuals feel comfortable, confident, and competent—requires that educators take an anti-bias approach to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their program. Educators who embrace an anti-bias curriculum approach reflect on their own identity and experiences. They extend their knowledge of different cultures and communities through conversation and discussion with children, families, and colleagues. They also confront bias in the preschool setting (e.g., “Girls can’t play here” or “His eyes are a funny shape”) to send a message that all children should be respected and that one’s words can hurt other people.

Instead of using a one-size-fits-all curriculum, anti-bias educators design environments and activities that reflect the real experiences of children’s lives. Educators routinely partner with families and community members to further enhance the early childhood program. Throughout the day, the adults in the preschool setting engage children in developmentally appropriate conversations about similarities and differences, and promote justice and fairness for all by helping children think critically about teasing, bullying, and other hurtful behavior. Activities that promote anti-bias education are integrated throughout the daily routine, thereby avoiding a tourist approach. “The heart of anti-bias work is a vision of a world in which all children are able to blossom, and each child’s particular abilities and gifts can flourish.” For more information on the anti-bias approach, refer to *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*, by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards.

Source:

L. Derman-Sparks and J. O. Edwards, Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010), 2.

The preschool learning foundations for History and Social Science are organized into five broad categories or strands:

- **Self and Society**: children’s growing ability to see themselves within the context of society
- **Becoming a Preschool Community Member (Civics)**: Becoming responsible and cooperative members of the preschool community
- **Sense of Time (History)**: developing understanding of past and future events and their association with the present
- **Sense of Place (Geography and Ecology)**: developing knowledge of the physical settings in which children live and how they compare with other locations
- **Marketplace (Economics)**: developing understanding of economic concepts, including the ideas of ownership, money exchanged for goods and services, value and cost, and bartering.



Figure 4.3.16: This child explored aeronautics and space through a mobile exhibit.

Supporting Self and Society

An early childhood education setting acquaints young children with people who have different backgrounds, family practices, languages, cultural experiences, special needs, and abilities. In their relationships with teachers and peers, preschoolers perceive how others are similar to them and how they are different, and gradually they learn to regard these differences with interest and respect rather than wariness or doubt. This is especially likely if early childhood educators incorporate inclusive practices into the preschool environment. The relationships that young children develop with others in the preschool provide opportunities for understanding these differences in depth and in the context of the people whom the child knows well. One of the most valuable features of a thoughtfully designed early childhood program is helping young children to perceive the diversity of human characteristics as part of the richness of living and working with other people.

Young children are beginning to perceive themselves within the broader context of society in another way. Their interest in adult social roles, occupations, and responsibilities motivates pretend play, excitement about visits to places such as a fire station or grocery store, and questions about work and its association with family roles and family income. Teachers can help young children explore these interests as children try to understand the variety of adult roles

1.0 Culture and Diversity

Culture and Diversity Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Exhibit developing cultural, ethnic, and racial identity and understand relevant language and cultural practices. Display curiosity about diversity in human characteristics and practices, but prefer those of their own group.	1.1 Manifest stronger cultural, ethnic, and racial identity and greater familiarity with relevant language, traditions, and other practices. Show more interest in human diversity, but strongly favor characteristics of their own group.

2.0 Relationships

Relationships Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Interact comfortably with many peers and adults; actively contribute to creating and maintaining relationships with a few significant adults and peers.	2.1 Understand the mutual responsibilities of relationships; take initiative in developing relationships that are mutual, cooperative, and exclusive.

3.0 Social Roles and Occupations

Social Roles and Occupations Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Play familiar adult social roles and occupations (such as parent, teacher, and doctor) consistent with their developing knowledge of these roles.	3.1 Exhibit a more sophisticated understanding of a broader variety of adult roles and occupations, but are uncertain how work relates to income.

Teachers can support children's development of the self and society foundations with the following:

- Practice a reflective approach to build awareness of self and others by examining your own attitudes and values
- Maintain a healthy curiosity about the experiences of others; ask authentic questions to build understanding
- Partner with families in goal setting and program design; learn individual family values and each family's goals for their child's care and education
- Prepare an active learning environment that incorporates the full spectrum of the human experience, including diversity of cultures, ethnicities, gender, age, abilities, socioeconomic class, and family structure
- Create an environment, both indoors and outdoors, that is inclusive, meaning every child can fully participate and engage in the learning environment regardless of gender, home language, or abilities
- Address children's initial comments and inquiries about diversity with honest, direct communication
- Have discussions about similarities and differences
- Sing songs and share stories in different languages
- Plan meaningful and authentic celebrations with the support of the children and families
- Read and talk about books that:
  - Accurately represent the lives and experiences of children
  - Deal with the theme of friendship and relating to others
  - Include images and stories of different workers
- Develop meaningful, nurturing relationships with the children in your program
- Prepare an early learning environment and daily routine that fosters peer interaction
- Support children's development of interaction strategies and relationship-building skills through:
  - Modeling
  - Explicit instruction during large-group times
  - Coaching and providing prompts
- Offer sensitive guidance through challenges
- Facilitate positive social problem solving
- Provide children with play props for exploring occupations and work settings
- Get to know the workers in your community
- Convey respect for the roles of adults who work at home
- Highlight the roles that elders play in family life and society
- Include the pursuit of further education among work options
- Invite family members to share their work experiences, including those that may diverge from traditional gender roles

- Talk about future career goals
- Visit community stores, businesses, and service providers to observe workers in action

Vignette

"You always get to do the money," complains Emma. Beck announces, "No, Tommy, I'm the customer. I was here first." Ella and Maya argue about the pieces of a plastic hamburger: "You can't have it again. It's the only one ..." These and similar interactions between children have been typical in the area ever since Ms. Berta added the "Restaurant" prop box to it.

Now, Ms. Berta is struggling to figure out how to foster more cooperation among children playing in this dramatic play area. The restaurant theme is very popular, but children's play is currently dominated by arguments over who gets to use which items from the restaurant prop box. Each child seems to be trying, independently, to hoard the most items from the box.

Ms. Berta shares her dilemma with Ms. Galyna, the school's mentor teacher, who says she can come in for a quick visit during the next day's play time. She follows her visit with some suggestions that help Ms. Berta rethink the area's design for the following week.

On Monday, the children entering the area are greeted by a large restaurant sign. A waist-high shelf unit defines the front of the area. On top of it sit two toy cash registers, supplied with ample paper bills, plastic coins, receipt pads, and pencils. A clear plastic jar labeled "Tips" sits in between. On a hook, hang clip-on badges: Cook, Cashier, Server, and Customer. There are several of each. The shelves under the front counter hold stacks of paper, drink cups, and trays. The cooking pans and utensils are clearly displayed on the area's stove and sink shelves, as are multiples of food items and dishes in the refrigerator and cupboard. The eating table is set for customers.

Ms. Berta begins play time as a restaurant customer, placing her order, asking questions of the employees, and helping the other players think about what a cook, server, or cashier in a restaurant would do. She refers them to each other with their ideas and questions, and soon they are having restaurant conversations with her and with each other "in character."

Over the next two weeks, the group makes changes and additions to the restaurant. At a class meeting, the group votes to make it a pizza restaurant, and the teacher adds donated pizza rounds that children cover with drawn-on toppings. With Ms. Berta's help, interested children work in pairs to write and post menus. Several small groups of children remain intensely interested in the theme, and their play in the restaurant area becomes more elaborate and content-rich. With active teacher support and modeling, friends can constructively solve conflicts that occur.

Pause to Reflect

1. What are some of your own biases and "blind spots" about people whose racial or cultural backgrounds are very different from yours?
2. In what ways could you partner with the families to support attitudes of acceptance and inclusion?

Supporting Becoming A Preschool Community Member (Civics)

An early childhood program is a wonderful setting for learning how to get along with others and for understanding and respecting differences between people. It is also an important setting for learning about oneself as a responsible member of the group. In an early childhood education setting, young children are enlisted into responsible citizenship for the first time outside of the family, encouraged to think of themselves as sharing responsibility for keeping the room orderly, cooperating with teachers and peers, knowing what to do during group routines (e.g., circle time), cleaning up after group activities, participating in group decisions, supporting and complying with the rules of the learning community, and acting as citizens of the preschool.



Figure 4.3.17: Knowing expected behavior during a large-group time is an important skill. (Jackie is licensed under CC BY 2.0)

Many formal and informal activities of an early childhood education setting contribute to developing the skills of preschool community membership. These include group decision making that may occur during circle time (including voicing opinions, voting on a shared decision, and accepting the judgment of the majority); resolving peer conflict and finding a fair solution; understanding the viewpoints of another with whom one disagrees; respecting differences in culture, race, or ethnicity; sharing stories about acting responsibly or helpfully and the guidance that older children can provide younger children or children with less positive experiences about being a preschool community citizen.

1.0 Skills for Democratic Participation

Skills for Democratic Participation Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Identify as members of a group, participate willingly in group activities, and begin to understand and accept responsibility as group members, although assistance is required in coordinating personal interests with those of others.	1.1 Become involved as responsible participants in group activities, with a growing understanding of the importance of considering others' opinions, group decision making, and respect for majority rules and the views of group members who disagree with the majority.

2.0 Responsible Conduct

Responsible Conduct Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Strive to cooperate with group expectations to maintain adult approval and get along with others. Self-control is inconsistent, however, especially when children are frustrated or upset.	2.1 Exhibit responsible conduct more reliably as children develop self-esteem (and adult approval) from being responsible group members. May also manage others' behavior to ensure that others also fit in with group expectations.

3.0 Fairness and Respect for Other People

Fairness and Respect for Other People Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Respond to the feelings and needs of others with simple forms of assistance, sharing, and turn-taking. Understand the importance of rules that protect fairness and maintain order.	3.1 Pay attention to others' feelings, are more likely to provide assistance, and try to coordinate personal desires with those of other children in mutually satisfactory ways. Actively support rules that protect fairness to others.

4.0 Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.1 Can use simple bargaining strategies and seek adult assistance when in conflict with other children or adults, although frustration, distress, or aggression also occurs.	4.1 More capable of negotiating, compromising, and finding cooperative means of resolving conflict with peers or adults, although verbal aggression may also result.

Teachers can support children's development of the civics foundations with the following:

- Share control of the preschool environment with children
- Create community rules with children's input and plan opportunities to continue discussing them with small- and large-group meetings
- Promote a sense of connection and community by using terms such as "we" and "our" when speaking with children and adults
- Incorporate class meetings into the daily routine of older preschool children
- Support freedom of thought and speech in individual investigations, as well as in planned group experiences
- Generate community rules and expectations to protect the rights of each individual and to create a community of trust and security
- Engage children in community brainstorming and problem-solving
- Make group decisions when appropriate
- Acknowledge emotions related to group brainstorming and decision making
- Model the skills and behavior you want children to exhibit
- Use guidance to redirect children to more appropriate actions and behavior by using positive descriptions of what you expect children to do
- Help children remember and meet community-generated rules and expectations by providing both visual and auditory cues and prompts
- Reinforce the positive actions of children by using descriptive language, emphasizing the positive impact of a child's actions on others
- Facilitate problem solving
- Create an inclusive environment that values and encourages the participation of children from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as children with special needs



Figure 4.3.18: Puppets allow children to role-play social situations. (Airman 1st Class Kevin West, public domain)

- Set the tone for responsible conduct by creating a high-quality learning environment and a thoughtfully scheduled daily routine
- Assign tasks for community care, such as watering plants, feeding program pets, or helping to prepare snacks, to help children practice responsibility
- Discuss the “whys” of fairness and respect
- Teach social skills, such as patience and generosity, by using social stories and role-play experiences
- Intervene and address negative interactions immediately
- Prevent conflicts by limiting program transitions and minimizing waiting time
- Provide children with a calm presence in conflict situations
- Support children’s conflict resolution by
- using descriptive language to help children make sense of conflict
- prompting children with open-ended questions and statements
- facilitating, rather than dictating, the solution process
- Create and refer children to problem-solving kits with visual cues
- Use and discuss books that have storylines around relationships, community, and conflict
- Use “persona dolls” or puppets and social stories to promote skill development and perspective taking

Vignettes

The children gather for circle time, and after the group’s gathering song, Ms. Anya begins dramatically. “Today, I am going to tell you a story about something that just happened in our room.

At the beginning of playtime today, two of our friends, Julia and Javier, told me their plan was to work with the medical kits in the house area. They were going to use the stethoscopes, bandages, and all the other medical tools to take care of the babies. I told them I would plan to visit later to see if their patients were feeling better.

A few minutes later, Julia and Javier hurried over to tell me that all the babies were missing. They had looked all over the clinic and had found no babies! Where do you think they looked?”

The children in the group call out their ideas about all the places the children could have looked. Ms. Anya continues, “You are right. They looked in all those places. No babies. So what did they do next?” Many children around the circle who are now recalling the incident call out, “They asked us to help!” “That’s right,” affirms Ms. Anya. “They know what good problem solvers you are and how good you are at teamwork, so they asked you. Pretty soon, you gave them lots of helpful suggestions of places to look. And did they find the babies?” “Yes!” the children call out. “And where were the baby dolls, Julia and Javier?” “They were out on the porch!” the children respond, laughing.

Ms. Anya concludes the story by repeating, “Yes, you are right. The dolls were out on the porch drying after yesterday’s bath. Thank you all for helping us solve the mystery of the missing baby dolls.”

Pause to Reflect

What are some ways educators can be a good example for children to follow as they learn skills for being members of a community?

Supporting Sense of Time (History)

One of our unique human characteristics is the ability to think of ourselves in relation to past events and to anticipate the future. The ability to see oneself in time enables us to derive lessons from past experiences, understand how we are affected by historical events, and plan for the immediate future (such as preparing a meal) or the long-term (such as obtaining an education). The ability to see oneself in time is also the basis for perceiving one's own growth and development, and the expectation of future changes in one's life.

The preschool years are a period of major advances in young children's understanding of past, present, and future events and how they are interconnected. Yet their ability to understand these interconnections is limited and fragile. Young preschoolers have a strong interest in past events but perceive them as "islands in time" that are not well connected to other past events. As they learn more about events of the past, and with the help of adults, children develop a mental timeline in which these events can be placed and related to each other. This is a process that begins during the preschool years and will continue throughout childhood and adolescence.

A thoughtfully designed early childhood program includes many activities that help young children develop a sense of the past and future. The activities may include conversations about a child's memorable experiences, discussions of a group activity that occurred yesterday, stories about historical events, circle-time activities in anticipation of a field trip tomorrow, and picture boards with the daily schedule in which special events can be distinguished from what normally happens. In these and other ways, teachers help young children construct their own mental timelines.



Figure 4.3.19: Children can share about things meaningful to them (from the past). (By woodleywonderworks, licensed under CC BY 2.0)

1.0 Understanding Past Events

Understanding Past Events Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Recall past experiences easily and enjoy hearing stories about the past, but require adult help to determine when past events occurred in relation to each other and to connect them with current experience.	1.1 Show improving ability to relate past events to other past events and current experiences, although adult assistance continues to be important.

2.0 Anticipating and Planning Future Events

Anticipating and Planning Future Events Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Anticipate events in familiar situations in the near future, with adult assistance.	2.1 Distinguish when future events will happen, plan for them, and make choices (with adult assistance) that anticipate future needs.

3.0 Personal History

Personal History Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Proudly display developing skills to attract adult attention and share simple accounts about recent experiences.	3.1 Compare current abilities with skills at a younger age and share more detailed autobiographical stories about recent experiences.

4.0 Historical Changes in People and the World

Historical Changes in People and the World Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
4.1 Easily distinguish older family members from younger ones (and other people) and events in the recent past from those that happened “long ago,” although they do not readily sequence historical events on a timeline.	4.1 Develop an interest in family history (e.g., when family members were children) as well as events of “long ago,” and begin to understand when these events occurred in relation to each other.

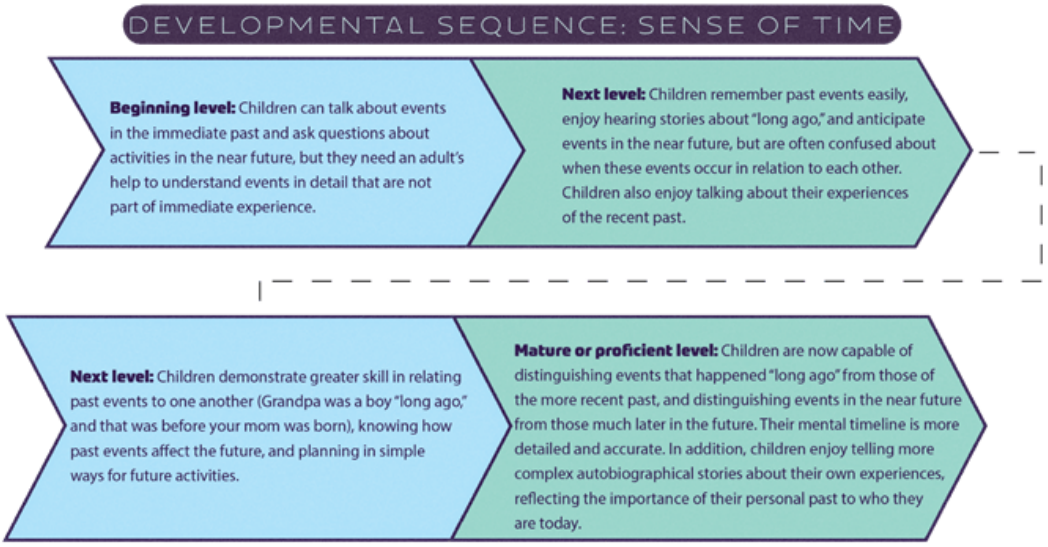


Figure 4.3.20: Developmental Sequence: Sense of Time. (Image by Anthony Flores under CC BY 4.0)

Teachers can support children's development of the history foundations with the following:

- Use predictable routines to facilitate children's sense of time
- Incorporate time words into conversation, such as before, after, yesterday, first, next, and later
- Create opportunities to talk with children about meaningful experiences and build connections between current and past events, and to anticipate future events
- Extend and expand on children's narrative descriptions with language relating to time
- Share your memories of the children's abilities over time
- Ask questions to increase children's recollections of events
- Document and display children's work at their eye level to encourage recall and reflection
- Sing songs, recite poetry, and read books that involve sequencing
- Promote planning as children engage in child-initiated projects
- Acknowledge birthdays, with sensitivity to family preferences
- Provide activities that invite personal reflection
- Make use of children's stories that explore growth and individual change
- Utilize familiar resources, such as parents, grandparents, family members, close friends, and community members, to share their own childhood experiences
- Read children's stories about different places and times to expand children's perspective
- Expose children to the arts
- Observe changes in animals, plants, and the outdoors
- Record significant events on a large calendar to create a program history
- Provide children with hands-on experiences with concrete artifacts and historical objects (e.g., toys, utensils, tools)

Vignettes

At outdoor play time, Mateo hurries over to a large tree limb lying at the edge of the playground. "Look what happened!" he exclaims. "Yeah," agrees Luis, who had joined him, "the wind did it. It crashed down our big tree, too, right into the street. Some guys are coming to saw it up." Luis pauses. "My grandma said that tree was really old." Ms. Sofia, who has followed them to the area, joins the conversation. "Your grandma told me about that when she came with you this morning. It's a big surprise when a tree that was there just yesterday suddenly isn't there anymore today, especially when it had been growing there for a long, long time. Things like that can happen fast. What do you think will be different when you get home this afternoon?"

For today's circle time, Ms. Robin has prepared a two-column chart with the headings: "When I was a baby, I couldn't…" and "Now I can…" She reads the first phrase and asks the group to think of things they were not able to do as babies. As children share their ideas, including "I couldn't walk; I couldn't ride a trike, I couldn't eat apples…" she lists them in the first column. When they finish, she reads all the ideas aloud to the group.

Ms. Robin then points to the phrase, "Now I can…" and again asks for children's ideas. After they finish sharing, she reads aloud the second list. As she points to each list, she comments to the group enthusiastically, "Look how many things you couldn't do when you were a baby! Look how many things you can do now! You've grown so much!"

Nico looks through the familiar, homemade, photo-illustrated book titled Teacher Jen's Broken Ankle that is displayed on the reading area book rack. "My papa fell and broke his arm when he was a little boy," he tells Ms. Jen. She asks him how it happened, and he tells her the story his papa has told him. Ms. Jen wonders with Nico whether his papa had to wear a cast on his arm while it was healing. Nico says he thinks so, because he remembers that Papa was supposed to keep his arm dry for a long time. He then asks Ms. Jen to show him again the ankle cast she wore while her leg was healing. She keeps the two halves of her bright pink cast in the "Hospital" prop box that teachers use in the dramatic play area when children's play signals interest in medical themes.

Pause to Reflect

How might you want to partner with families to make the preschool environment reflective of their diverse family stories?

Supporting Sense of Place (Geography and Ecology)

Each person has a sense of the places to which they belong: home, workplace, school, and other locations that are familiar and meaningful. Young children experience this sense of place strongly because familiar locations are associated with important people who constitute the child's environment of relationships. Locations are important because of the people with whom they are associated: home with family members, preschool with teachers and peers. Preschoolers also experience a sense of place because of the sensory experiences associated with each location: the familiar smells, sounds, and sometimes temperatures and tastes combine with familiar scenes to create for young children a sense of belonging.

Developing a sense of place also derives from how young children interact with aspects of that physical location. Preschool children relate to their environments as they work with materials; rearrange tables, chairs, and other furniture; create maps to familiar locations; travel regularly from one setting to another; and work in other ways with their environments. Young children also interact with their environments as they learn to care for them. Young children's natural interest in living things engages their interest in caring for plants and animals, concern for the effects of pollution and litter on the natural environment, and later, taking an active role in putting away trash and recycling used items.

These interests present many opportunities to the early childhood educator. Young children can be engaged in activities that encourage their understanding of the environments in which they live, whether they involve creating drawings and maps of familiar locations, talking about how to care for the natural world, discussing the different environments in which people live worldwide, or taking a trip to a marshland or a farm.

1.0 Navigating Familiar Locations

Navigating Familiar Locations Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Identify the characteristics of familiar locations such as home and school, describe objects and activities associated with each, recognize the routes between them, and begin using simple directional language (with various degrees of accuracy).	1.1 Comprehend larger familiar locations, such as the characteristics of their community and region (including hills and streams, weather, common activities) and the distances between familiar locations (such as between home and school), and compare their home community with those of others.

2.0 Caring for the Natural World

Caring for the Natural World Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Show an interest in nature (including animals, plants, and weather), especially as children have direct experiences with them. Begin to understand human interactions with the environment (such as pollution in a lake or stream) and the importance of taking care of plants and animals.	2.1 Show an interest in a wider range of natural phenomena, including those not directly experienced (such as snow for a child living in Southern California), and are more concerned about caring for the natural world and the positive and negative impacts of people on the natural world (e.g., recycling, putting trash in trash cans).

3.0 Understanding the Physical World Through Drawings and Maps

Understanding the Physical World Through Drawings and Maps Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Can use drawings, globes, and maps to refer to the physical world, although often unclear on the use of map symbols.	3.1 Create their own drawings, maps, and models; are more skilled at using globes, maps, and map symbols; and use maps for basic problem solving (such as locating objects) with adult guidance.

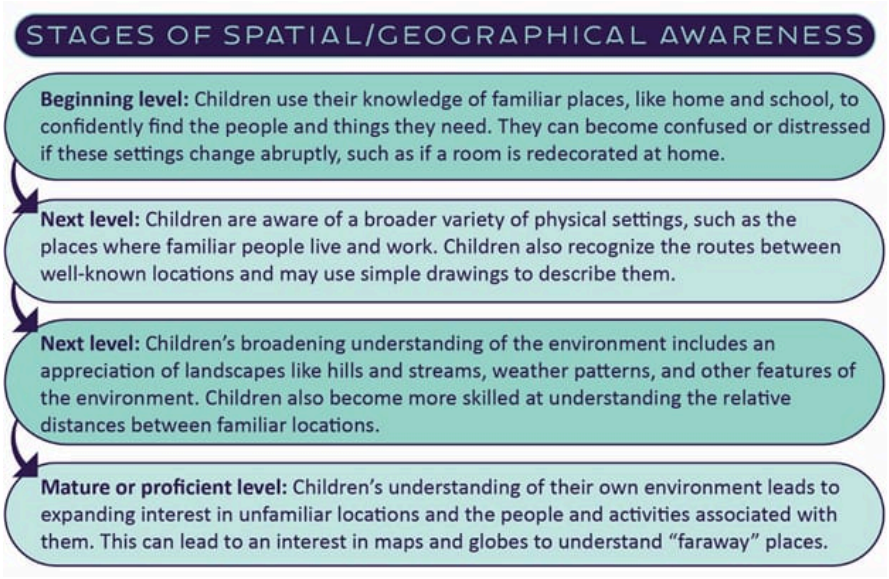


Figure 4.3.21: Stages of Spatial/Geographical Awareness.(Image by the California Department of Education is used with permission)

Teachers can support children's development of geography and ecology foundations with the following:

- Supply open-ended materials in the indoor and outdoor early learning environment to promote exploration of spatial relationships
- Set aside time for outdoor explorations each day
- Provide children with sensory experiences, especially those with sand and water
- Describe your actions as you travel between locations
- Play games about how to get from here to there
- Engage children in conversation about how they travel to and from preschool each day
- Take walks through familiar locations and neighboring areas
- Talk about the here and now, as well as encouraging later reflection
- Locate and explore local landmarks
- Promote children's understanding of weather and its impact on their day-to-day experiences
- Comment on weather patterns and invite children to share their observations
- Read aloud books and engage children in storytelling related to
- Navigating familiar locations and daily routines
- Investigating the Earth and its attributes
- Integrate living things into the indoor learning environment
- Observe life in its natural setting
- Compare and contrast living and nonliving things
- Model respect and care for the natural world
- Use descriptive language to talk about the Earth and its features
- Teach young children easy ways to conserve the Earth's resources
- Grow a garden in the program's outdoor space
- Eat fresh produce at snack time and obtain food directly from a local gardener, farmers market, or food vendor when possible
- Engage children in conversations about maps, provide map-making materials, incorporate maps into dramatic play, use maps when planning outings, and make a map of the classroom/building and outdoor space
- Supply the learning environment with a variety of blocks and other open-ended materials to support the symbolic representation of the world the children see and experience each day
- Play board games that use trails and pathways
- View locations from different physical perspectives
- Prepare a treasure hunt



Figure 4.3.22: These girls are drawing a map.

Vignettes

Michael sits down with his peers and Mr. Sean at the snack table. “There was a huge dump truck going down my street today,” he tells everyone. Mr. Sean asked him what was in the truck. “Rocks and big sidewalk pieces,” replies Michael. “I know that,” adds Rio. “It’s by my house. Papa says they’re digging up the street for water pipes.” Several other children nod and agree that they know where that is and they have gone by it, too. Mr. Sean tells the children that the construction site they are talking about is just around the corner and down one block from their preschool. “Would you like to take a walk together to watch them work?” he asks. “It sounds like a big and exciting construction project is happening in our neighborhood.”

“I like this place,” shares Maya as she looks around the small reading area. “What do you like about it?” asks Ms. Nicole. “I like the green. It’s like un bosque.” Yes, agrees Ms. Nicole. The green plants do make it seem like a forest.”

This is the castle for the princess and her friends,” explains Grace to Tanya as she describes her unit block structure. “Here’s the bedroom over here, and the tower over there.”

Ms. Julia, sitting in the block area to observe children’s play, responds, “It looks like a very long way from the bedroom to the tower. Do the princess and her friends ever get lost in the castle?” “Well…sometimes they do,” replies Grace. “I wonder if we could draw something to help them find their way,” suggests Ms. Julia. “Like a map!” exclaims Tanya to Grace.

Ms. Julia offers to bring the clipboards, equipped with paper and pencils, from the art area. She takes one and begins describing her drawing plan. “First, I’m going to draw a square for the bedroom in this corner . . . ” The girls begin by imitating her technique and soon are exchanging ideas with each other as they draw their versions of the castle. When they are finished, Ms. Julia asks questions about the parts of their castle maps and offers to label them. When the maps are finished, labeled, and signed, Ms. Julia asks the girls’ permission to display them on the block area wall.

Pause to Reflect

What would be ways you would be comfortable bringing caring for the natural world into your own classroom? What might be some things to try beyond that?

Supporting Marketplace (Economics)

Young children’s interest in adult roles and occupations extends to the economy. Preschoolers know that adults have jobs, and

they observe that money is used to purchase items and services, but the connections between work, money, and purchasing are unclear to them. This does not stop them, however, from enacting these processes in their pretend play and showing great interest in the economic transactions they observe (such as a trip to the bank with a parent).

Moreover, young children are also active as consumers, seeking to persuade their families to purchase toys or access to activities that they desire, sometimes hearing adult concerns about cost or affordability in response. On occasion, they also learn about economic differences between people and families, such as when a parent is unemployed or when families are living in poverty. All of these activities convince them that the economy, while abstract to them, is important.

A carefully designed early childhood education setting provides many opportunities for young children to explore these ideas through play, conversation, and the creation of economic items to buy, sell, or exchange.



Figure 4.3.23: A cash register is an excellent prompt for exploration of economics. (Image by the California Department of Education is used with permission)

1.0 Exchange

Exchange Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Understand ownership, limited supply, what stores do, give-and-take, and payment of money to sellers. Show interest in money and its function, but still figuring out the relative value of coins.	1.1 Understand more complex economic concepts (e.g., bartering; more money is needed for things of greater value; if more people want something, more will be sold).

Teachers can support children's development of the economic foundations with the following:

- Introduce economic concepts (e.g., production, exchange, consumption) through children's books
- Provide open-ended materials to support children's spontaneous investigations of business and the economy
- Offer dramatic play experiences that allow children to explore economic concepts
- Explore alongside children, expanding on their initiative
- Draw attention to trends of consumption in the preschool setting
- Discuss wants and needs with children and allow children to help make economic decisions
- Explore all forms of exchange
- Visit local businesses
- Create an opportunity for children to make and sell their own product; discuss how the money made will be spent

Vignettes

Ms. Jen settles into the reading chair to begin large group story time. She holds a tall empty jar, a small cloth bag, and a book.

"Today I brought something with me to help me tell a story," she begins. Then she holds up the small drawstring bag and shakes it. "Money!" call out the children. "Yes, it is money. My little bag is full of coins: nickels, dimes, and quarters," she says, pulling out one of each. "This book is all about a family who collects coins and saves them in a jar that looks a lot like this one. It's called A Chair for My Mother, and Vera B. Williams is the author. She wrote the words. She is also the illustrator, which means she painted the pictures."

As Ms. Jen reads the book, she stops frequently to converse with children about what is happening in the story. "The mother in this story works as a server in a restaurant. That's how she earns money to buy the things her family needs." After reading the page that describes the "tips" that Mother brings home and puts into the jar, Ms. Jen asks the group if anyone they know gets tips at work. After explaining the idea, she pours the coins from her small bag into the tall jar she has brought as a story prop.

When she reads the pages about the family's moving day, when all their relatives and neighbors brought things they needed to replace the ones lost in the fire, Ms. Jen talks about how people don't always buy all the things they need. Sometimes people receive gifts and things that others share with them.

As each economic concept is introduced in the book, Ms. Jen pauses to draw attention to it while maintaining the flow of the story. At the end, she holds up the jar of coins and asks the group how long they think it took for Josephine's family to collect enough coins to buy the chair. She responds to their comments, listening as they share their own related ideas. She concludes by telling them that the book will be in the reading area tomorrow for them to enjoy again.

Pause to Reflect

What resources are in your neighborhood that a preschool teacher could use to introduce children to the community's economic life?

Engaging Families

Teachers can make the following suggestions to families to facilitate their support of history and social science.

- Encourage families to tell stories and sing songs to their child about their home culture
- Remind families that they are the child's most influential models.
- Support families to help their child develop strong, warm relationships with adults and children among their family and friends.
- Suggest ways that family members can talk with their child about the daily work they do.
- Suggest that adults find household projects to work on with their child.
- Remind adults to notice and recognize times when their child is being cooperative and responsible.
- Encourage adults to talk with their child about respect and fairness.
- Work with adult family members as they establish some simple, age-appropriate rules to be followed at home and help children understand that there is a reason for each rule.
- Share ways to establish some dependable family rituals and routines.
- Remind families to discuss family plans and events with children before they occur.
- Share with family adults the importance of recounting past shared events with their children. Suggest that they use storytelling to help children remember the sequence and details of both everyday and special experiences.
- Suggest that families find a special place for items that document children's growth.
- Encourage adult family members to tell children stories about their family's history.
- Suggest that they look for maps in places where their family goes.
- Suggest taking different routes when going to familiar places.
- Encourage families to talk about nature (i.e., weather, seasons, plants, animals, and so on) with their child.
- Encourage families to have conversations about ways they can help the earth (reduce waste, conserve natural resources,

compost, etc.)
- Suggest that adult family members share with their child elements of the natural world they especially enjoy.
- Encourage families to talk with their child about the connection between cost and decisions to buy items and services.
- Assure families that it is fine to have conversations about “wants” and “needs.”
- Suggest that families show their child some alternative ways to acquire things the family needs or wants, as well as ways to help meet the needs of others.
- Encourage families to begin to share with preschool children their own values about money.
- Prepare yourselves, as early care and education professionals, to play an active role in supporting families facing personal economic crises. Educate yourselves about available community services and, when possible, help families to obtain access to them.



Figure 4.3.24: This three-year-old boy is helping with the dishes. (ThreeIfByBike is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0)

The knowledge and skills in history and social science that preschoolers acquire in an early education setting provide a foundation for their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. Adults benefit from the perspective of history (of society, families, and one’s past). People are connected deeply to the physical settings and natural ecologies in which they live. People learn about themselves and others by comparison with people who differ in culture, language, ethnicity, traditions, and abilities. Human lives are shaped by the economy and its influence on people’s roles as workers, consumers, and investors. Citizens participate with others in the political process and in building their communities. As preschoolers learn about these topics through instruction, enactment, and play, they are introduced to issues that will remain important to them for years to come.

References

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4.4: Incorporate Effective Transitions into Social Studies Learning Experiences

In Chapter 1, we discussed the importance of transitions in the early childhood classroom, emphasizing how effective transitions help children move smoothly between activities and promote a productive learning environment. Effective transitions are crucial for maintaining a structured day and supporting children's development.



Figure 4.4.1: Effective Transitions

Transitions play a vital role in maintaining a smooth and productive day. They minimize disruptions and ensure a seamless shift from one activity to another. By capturing the children's attention and interest, effective transitions prepare them mentally for what comes next. This approach helps you provide clear directions about upcoming activities and guides the children on how to proceed. Additionally, effective transitions facilitate moving the children from one activity to another in an orderly fashion, maintaining a calm and focused environment. They also assist in assessing what the children have learned, offering opportunities to reinforce their learning and ensure continued engagement.

Effective Transitions in Early Childhood Education

An effective transition captures the children's attention and focus, making them excited about the upcoming activity. This is crucial for maintaining a smooth and productive classroom environment.

What an Effective Transition is Not:



- Simply telling the children, "Ok, we are going to read a story," or "We are going to do this activity."
- Asking, "Who wants to...?"

When you ask, "Who wants to...?", you risk setting yourself up for failure because children might respond with, "I don't!"

Strategies for Effective Transitions

To introduce the next activity effectively, use engaging and interactive methods that capture the children's attention. Incorporate elements that pique their curiosity and interest, making them eager to participate. Additionally, provide clear and enthusiastic directions to guide the children smoothly from one activity to another, ensuring a seamless and orderly transition.

With these strategies in mind, you can explore a variety of transition activities that will keep the children engaged and excited about what's coming next. Here are some ideas to get you started...

Gaining Attention and/or Interest



When planning transitions to gain children's attention before a story or activity, choose strategies that excite them and spark curiosity about the upcoming lesson. Some ideas for this include songs or finger-plays related to the activity or story, surprise boxes or bags, puppets, drawing their attention to previous learning and helping them make a connection to the new learning that will occur in the activity. Below are engaging ideas for preschoolers, toddlers, and infants that connect to social studies themes like community helpers, cultural diversity, and geography.

Transitions Before a Story or Activity

For Preschoolers

Songs or Rhymes

Use a song or rhyme that ties into a social studies theme, like community helpers or cultural diversity, to draw children's focus to the lesson ahead.

Example: "Let's sing 'The Helpers in Our Town' before we start our story about different people in our community who help us!"

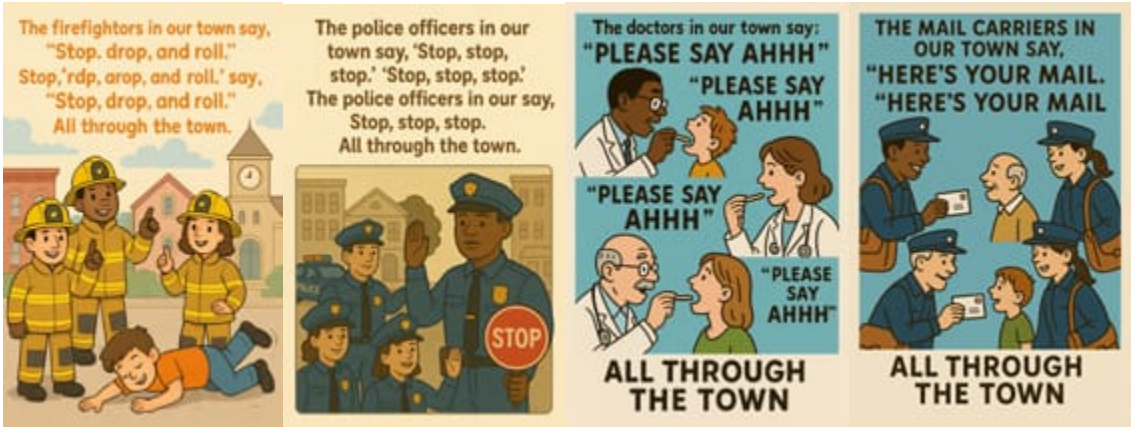
The Helpers in Our Town **(Tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")**

Verse 1: *The firefighters in our town say, "Stop, drop, and roll..."*

Verse 2: *The police officers in our town say, "Stop, stop, stop..."*

Verse 3: *The doctors in our town say, "Please say ahhh..."*

Verse 4: *The mail carriers in our town say, “Here’s your mail…”*



Pictures

Show a picture of something familiar and engaging, like a group of people from different backgrounds or a scene of a community gathering. Encourage children to make observations or predictions.

Example: "Look at this picture of children playing together in a park. What do you think they're doing? Can you guess what our story might be about?"



Sound Effects

Use relevant sound effects, such as city noises, nature sounds, or cultural music, to spark interest and set the stage for the activity.

Example: "Can you hear the sound of a busy city? Our story today is about life in a big city!"



Movement

Encourage a movement or action that ties into the social studies theme, like mimicking a cultural dance or community helper actions.

Example: "Let's all pretend to climb a tall ladder to rescue someone!" or "Can we all pretend to be firefighters and spray water with our hoses?"



Magic Words

Introduce a "magic word" that signals the start of the story or activity and creates excitement.

Example: "When I say 'Explore,' it means our story is about to begin! Ready? Explore!"



Character Puppet

Use a puppet or toy to introduce a character from the upcoming story, like a community helper or historical figure.

Example: "Meet Mr. Policeman! He's going to help us tell our story about keeping our community safe."



Simple Question

Ask a question to engage children and encourage them to think about the theme before the story begins.

Example: "Have you ever seen a globe? Our story today is about different places around the world."



Short Video Clip

Show a brief, age-appropriate video clip that connects to the social studies theme, like a cultural celebration or a historical event.

Example: "Let's watch this short video about a parade before we read our story about different celebrations."



Surprise Bags

Use surprise bags filled with themed items like small toys or educational goodies to build anticipation for the activity or story.

Example: "Let's open our surprise bags! Inside, you'll find mini firefighter hats and police badges to go along with our story about community helpers."



For Toddlers

Simple Question and Answer (Family or Community Helpers Theme)

Ask a simple question related to the theme and encourage toddlers to answer, sparking curiosity.

Example: "Who helps us in our community?" or "Who is in your family?"



Animal Movement (Geography or Environmental Theme)

Engage toddlers by asking them to move like the animals from the story or activity.

Example: "Let's walk like bears! Now, let's hop like bunnies, just like in our story!"



Movement Song (Cultural or Community Helpers Theme)

Use a fun, simple song that connects to social studies concepts like community or culture to engage toddlers before starting the activity. The following song incorporates actions to engage toddlers while highlighting the importance of community helpers. It encourages active participation and rhythmic movement while connecting to the theme of helping others.



Example: "Here We Go, Helpers!"

"March, march, march with me, Helping others, you'll soon see!
Clap, clap, clap your hands so bright, We help together, day and night!

Stomp, stomp, stomp your feet, Community helpers are so neat!
Wave, wave, wave your hands, We all help, that's our plan!"

For Infants

Calm, Gentle Interaction (Cultural or Family Theme)

Use soft, calming interactions to transition infants while connecting the theme to family or culture.

Example: "Now we're going to explore our family toys, just like in the story. Let's look at our family pictures together."



Object Exploration (Geography or Family Theme)

Give infants a toy related to the theme, like a plush doll representing a family member or community helper.

Example: "Here's a toy firefighter to play with. Let's explore together and get ready for our story about community helpers."



Gentle Music (Cultural or Environmental Theme)

Play soft, soothing music that aligns with the story's theme to create a calm environment and prepare infants for the upcoming activity.

Example: "We're going to sing a soft song about family and love, just like in the story. Let's go slowly and listen."



Transitions after the Story or Activity

Dismissal Transition: Planning a dismissal transition from one activity to the next is just as important as planning a transition to introduce the activity. A teacher may be dismissing the children from story time to play time or recess, or may have just explained directions to an activity in the group time area, but the children must move to another area of the classroom to complete the activity, such as the art area so the teacher needs an effective way to move the children from the group area to the art area.

Teachers often use this time to assess what the children have learned by asking them a question. The teacher asks the children a question, one at a time. As each child answers, they are dismissed to the next activity.

Teachers should be thoughtful and intentional in their dismissal transition activities. It is best when transitions are connected to the learning or theme of the activities they are doing. Below are several ideas for each age group.

For Preschoolers

Question-Based Transition

After a social studies story (e.g., about community helpers or family), ask a question to help reinforce the social studies theme. After each child answers, they can be dismissed to the next activity. This can tie into a "community helpers" themed art or dramatic play area.
Example: *If the story were about community helpers:*
"What does a teacher do to help people?"



Action-Based Transition (Community Helpers Theme)

Have children act out being community helpers. Children can mime actions related to community helpers (like driving a fire truck, delivering mail, etc.) before moving to the next area.

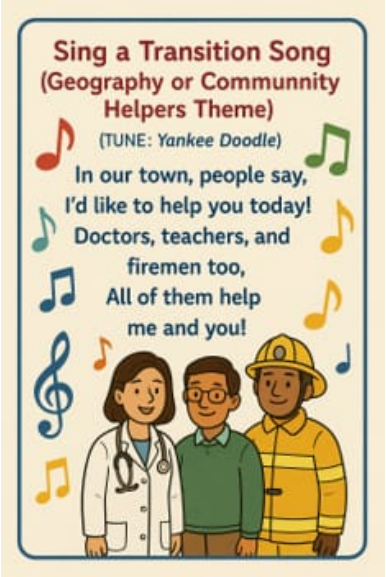
Example: *"Let's all pretend to be mail carriers delivering letters! Once you've delivered your letter, head to the block area to build a house for the mail to go to!"*



Sing a Transition Song (Geography or Community Helpers Theme)

You can create a song related to a social studies theme, like family or community. Sing this song while transitioning to a new area, like the "Community Helpers" play station.
Example: (TUNE: Yankee Doodle)

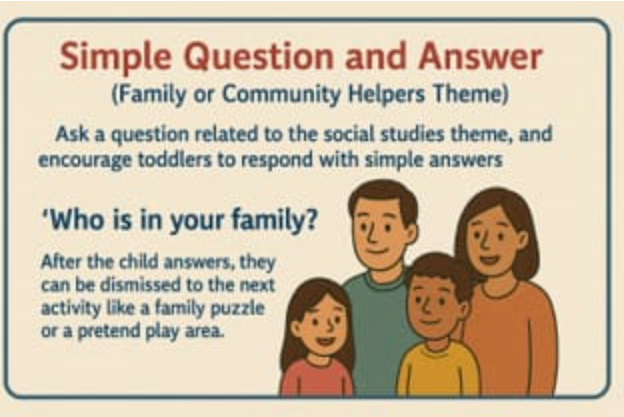
"In our town, people say,
I'd like to help you today!
Doctors, teachers, and firemen, too,
All of them help me and you!



For Toddlers

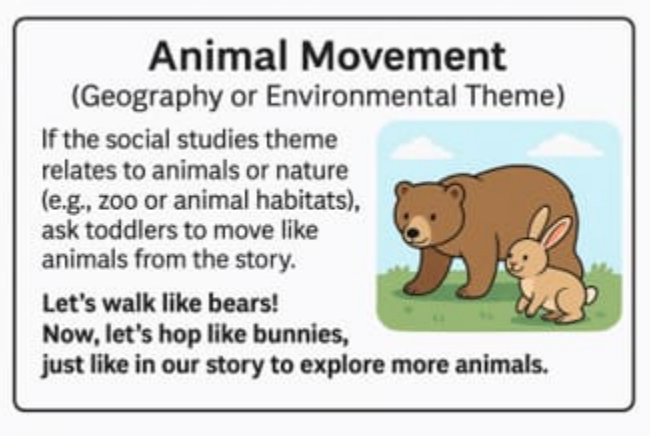
Simple Question and Answer (Family or Community Helpers Theme)

Ask a question related to the social studies theme, and encourage toddlers to respond with simple answers.
Example: *If the story were about families:*
"Who is in your family?"
After the child answers, they can be dismissed to the next activity, like a family puzzle or a pretend play area.



Animal Movement (Geography or Environmental Theme)

If the social studies theme relates to animals or nature (e.g., zoo or animal habitats), ask toddlers to move like animals from the story. Toddlers can imitate animal movements before transitioning to a related learning center.
Example: *"Let's walk like bears! Now, let's hop like bunnies, just like in our story! When you're done, let's head to the sensory table to explore more animals."*



Movement Song (Cultural or Community Helpers Theme)

For toddlers, a song that connects to social studies concepts like community or culture works well. The song could connect to the idea of working together in a community.
Example: Tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."
"Pick, pick, pick up the toys.

Pick up all the toys.

Work together, work together.

Pick up all the toys."



For Infants

Calm, Gentle Interaction (Cultural or Family Theme)

For infants, you can connect the transition to the theme of family or culture with soft, calm interactions. This helps infants understand the transition by connecting the experience to the theme.
Example: *"Now we're going to explore our family toys, just like in the story. Let's walk (or crawl) together and see what we can play with!" Or for infants that aren't mobile yet, "I am going to carry you over to the carpet so we can look at pictures of our families."*



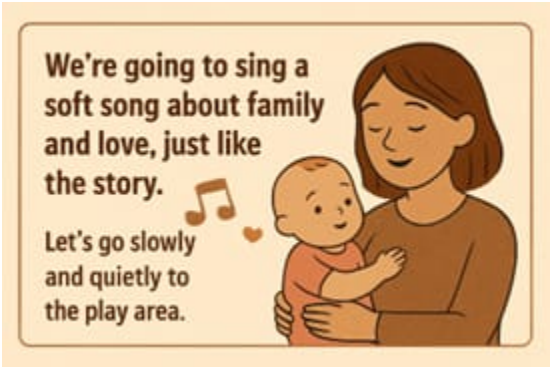
Object Exploration (Geography or Family Theme)

Give infants a toy related to the theme, such as a soft toy representing a family member (e.g., a plush doll, a toy representing a community helper like a firefighter or doctor). This creates a tactile connection between the story and the transition.
Example: *"Here's a toy firefighter to play with. Let's go over to the play area where we can pretend to be helpers, just like in our story."*



Gentle Music (Cultural or Environmental Theme)

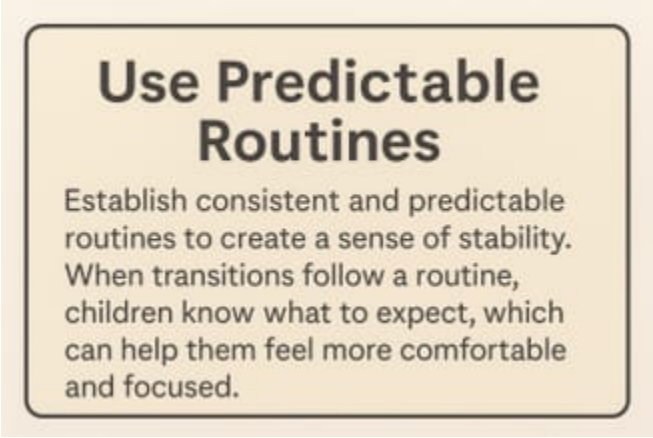
Play soft music that corresponds with the theme of the story (e.g., a lullaby to represent family or cultural practices). This keeps the transition calm and reinforces the social studies theme in a soothing way.
Example: "*We're going to sing a soft song about family and love, just like the story. Let's go slowly and quietly to the play area.*"



Supporting Children During Transitions

Below are strategies for supporting children during transitions, aligned with social studies themes such as community, culture, geography, and family. These strategies can help connect the transitions to the content children are learning, making the process more engaging and meaningful.

Use Predictable Routines (Community & Culture)



Establish consistent and predictable routines to create a sense of stability. When transitions follow a routine, children know what to expect, which can help them feel more comfortable and focused.

Social Studies Connection: By creating a structured routine, children learn about **community** and **cultural practices**, understanding that different places (e.g., schools, homes, communities) have their own routines and ways of doing things.

Example: "At the end of each day, we will gather to talk about what we learned, just like families have certain traditions at the end of the day."

Give Warnings Before Transitions (Community Helpers)



Provide advance notice (e.g., 5-minute warning) before transitioning to the next activity. This helps children prepare mentally for the change.

Social Studies Connection: This strategy teaches children about the **role of community helpers** who provide structure in society (like teachers, bus drivers, and doctors), giving them time to prepare for changes in their day.

Example: "In five minutes, we will get ready for circle time. Just like a firefighter gets ready to respond when needed, we will get ready for our next activity!"

Create Transition Routines or Rituals (Cultural Traditions)



Develop simple, engaging rituals or songs that signal when it's time to transition to a new activity.

Social Studies Connection: Rituals and traditions are central to every **culture**. This strategy can help children recognize that transitions are a part of the everyday life of communities and families, helping them learn about different cultural practices.

Example: "When it's time to clean up, we sing our special 'clean-up song.' In many cultures, there are songs for different times of the day, like when it's time to eat or clean."

Offer Choices (Diversity & Inclusion)



Giving children a choice during transitions provides a sense of control and can make the process more enjoyable.

Social Studies Connection: Offering choices helps children recognize the value of **diversity** and **individuality**. It allows them to appreciate different perspectives and ways of doing things, as children come from various backgrounds and might have different preferences.

Example: "Would you like to clean up the art supplies or the books? Everyone in a community has different jobs, just like how doctors, teachers, and helpers have different roles."

Use Positive Reinforcement (Community Values)



Reinforce positive behaviors by acknowledging and praising children when they transition well.

Social Studies Connection: Reinforcing positive behavior teaches children about the **values** of a community, such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others. It helps them understand the importance of contributing to a positive environment.

Example: "Great job, Sarah! You helped clean up so quickly. That's just like how community helpers work together to make our neighborhoods better!"

Give Children a Job (Roles in Society)



Assign children small tasks or jobs during transitions to keep them engaged and give them a sense of responsibility.

Social Studies Connection: Giving children a "job" connects to the concept of **roles in society**. Just like in communities where everyone has a specific role (e.g., firefighters, teachers), children can learn about how each person contributes to the group.

Example: "Emily, you are our helper today! Can you hand out the napkins to everyone as we transition to snack time?"

Allow Time for Reflection (Family & Traditions)

Allow children to reflect on what they were doing before they transition. This gives them a moment to mentally close one activity before moving on.

Social Studies Connection: Reflecting on activities or experiences allows children to relate the concept of **family** and **personal history** to transitions. It gives them the opportunity to think about their place in the world and the traditions they follow.

Example: "Before we leave the art table, take a moment to look at your artwork and think about how you feel when you create, just like how families celebrate their traditions."

Set Expectations Clearly (Roles in Society)

Be clear about what children are expected to do during the transition, using simple language and specific instructions.

Social Studies Connection: Setting clear expectations reflects how **society** works by establishing rules and guidelines. Children can learn that roles and expectations are part of community life, whether in a family, school, or larger society.

Example: "When I say 'time to clean up,' everyone will put their toys away so we can get ready to be helpers in our next activity."

Strategies for All Ages

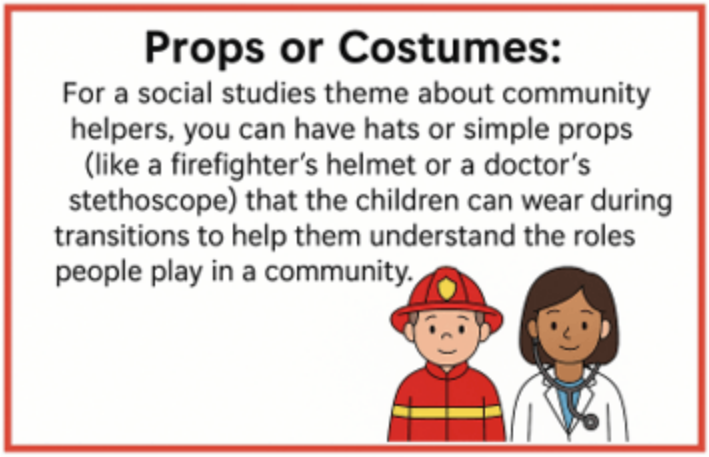
Visual Cues

Use pictures of community helpers, family members, or cultural symbols to visually connect the children with the theme before the activity or when transitioning to a new area.



Props or Costumes

Introduce themed props (like firefighter helmets or doctor stethoscopes) to build anticipation for the roles people play in the community. Or to transition children to a new area, you can have hats or simple props (like a firefighter's helmet or a doctor's stethoscope) that the children can wear during transitions to help them understand the roles people play in a community.



Routine & Consistency

Consistently use the same song, gesture, or phrase for transitions to reinforce the social studies concepts children are learning.



Conclusion

By using these strategies, you can engage preschoolers, toddlers, and infants in meaningful transitions that capture their attention and excitement, setting the stage for a successful and relevant social studies experience. By connecting your transition activities to a social studies theme, you can make learning meaningful while helping children smoothly move from one activity to another.

Which of these ideas do you think would be most engaging for your students?

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4.5: Incorporate the WMELS Framework

Purpose of WMELS

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) provide a comprehensive framework outlining developmental expectations for children from birth until they enter first grade. These standards cover all areas of a child's learning and development, divided into specific domains and sub-domains. WMELS serves as a guide for educators to align their teaching strategies, learning experiences, and assessment practices with the state's standards and best practices. The primary purpose of WMELS is to ensure that young children receive a well-rounded, equitable, and developmentally appropriate education that fosters their physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive, and learning approaches.

This chapter aims to provide a detailed guide on incorporating the WMELS framework into early childhood lesson plans, specifically aligning with the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) standards. It includes an overview of the WMELS domains and sub-domains, steps for setting clear learning objectives, designing engaging and meaningful activities, integrating key developmental domains, and providing ongoing observation and assessment. Additionally, the document highlights strategies for involving families and communities in the learning process. By following these guidelines, educators can create lesson plans that promote comprehensive development in young children, ensuring they are prepared for future academic and social success.

Developmental Domains

The 5 domains are distinct areas of a child's development, which are interconnected, meaning development in one domain often impacts development in another.



Figure 4.5.1: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Domains

Sub-Domains

Each developmental domain is further divided into sub-domains, labeled with letters such as A, B, and C. Each of the Sub-Domains is pictured below with its corresponding Domain.

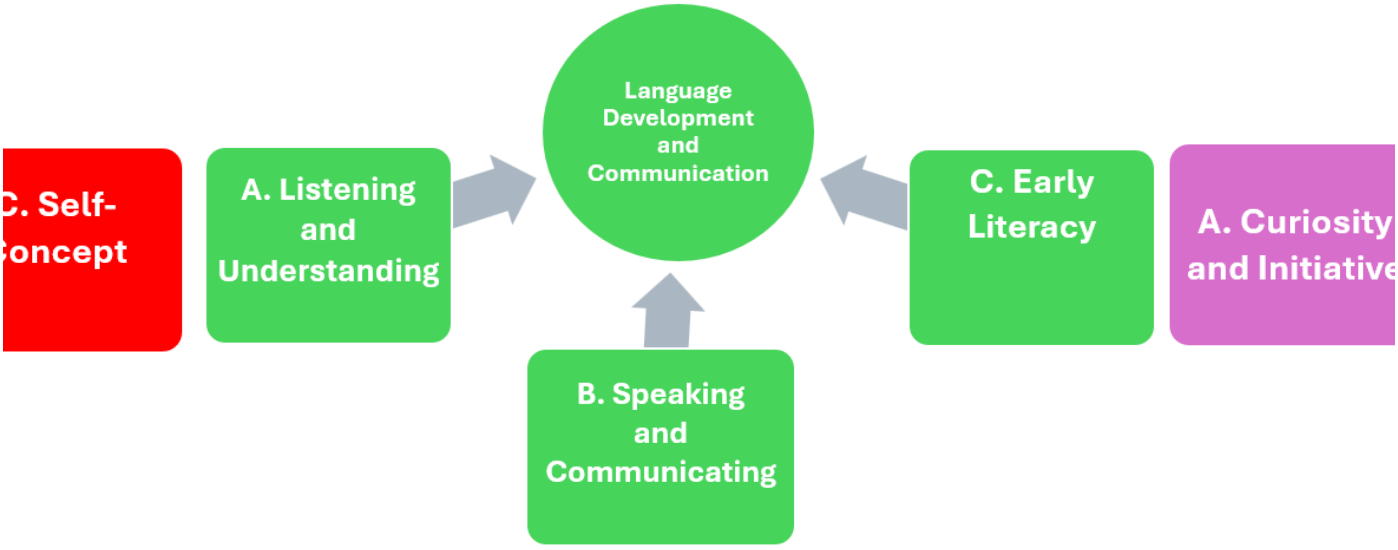


Figure 4.5.2: The WMELS Domains with their sub-domains.

How to Navigate the WMELS Book

There are 5 sections in the book. Each section reflects one of the learning domains. Each section has a table of contents and an introductory section explaining the domain and its sub-domains. In the image below, the Domain of Approaches to Learning is indicated by the orange shaded rectangle. Each of the 3 sub-domains for Approaches to Learning is circled in **ORANGE**.

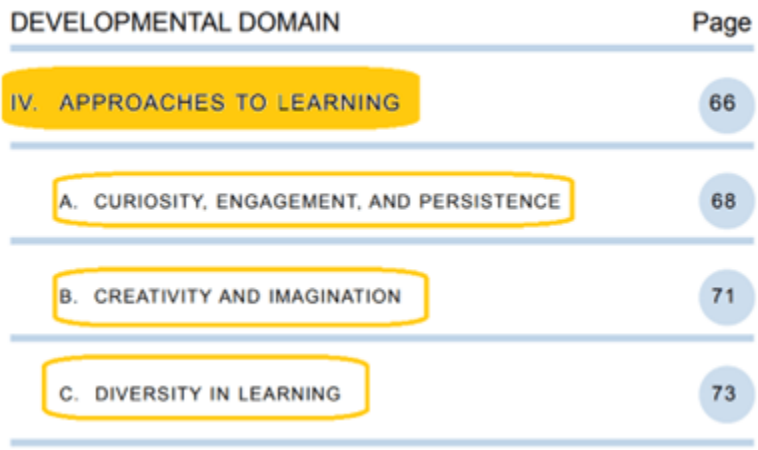


Figure 4.5.3: Example of WMELS table of contents.

Developmental Expectations

These are broad statements describing what children should know and be able to do, acknowledging the wide variability in early childhood development. The Developmental Expectations are broad statements about each of the Sub-Domains. It is circled in **GREEN** in the image below.

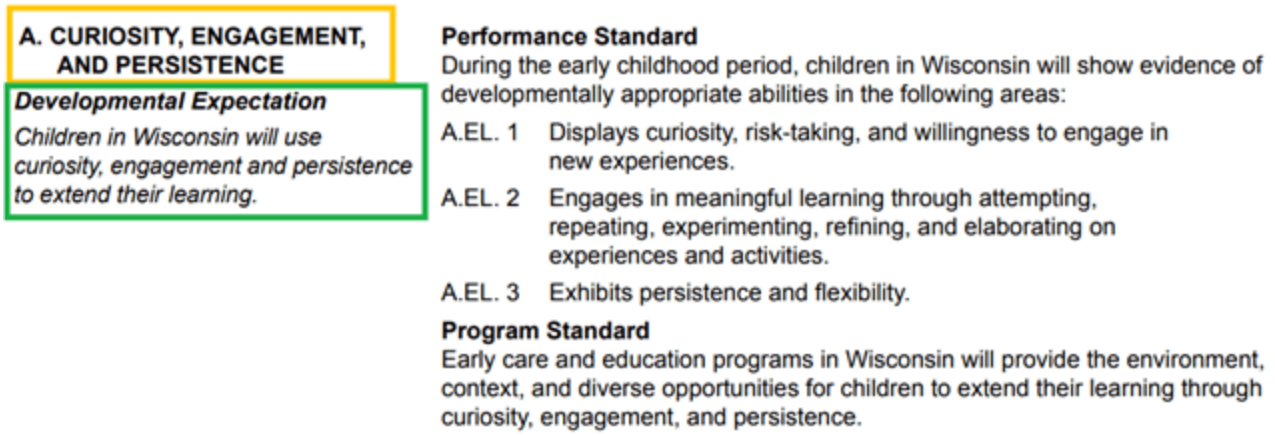


Figure 4.5.4: Example of WMELS Developmental Expectations

Performance Standards

These standards specify the information and skills children should acquire. They are designed from birth to first grade and align with the Common Core State Standards. There are 3 Performance Standards for this particular Sub-Domain. They are circled in BLUE. They are also indicated by A.EL.1, A.EL.2, A.EL3.

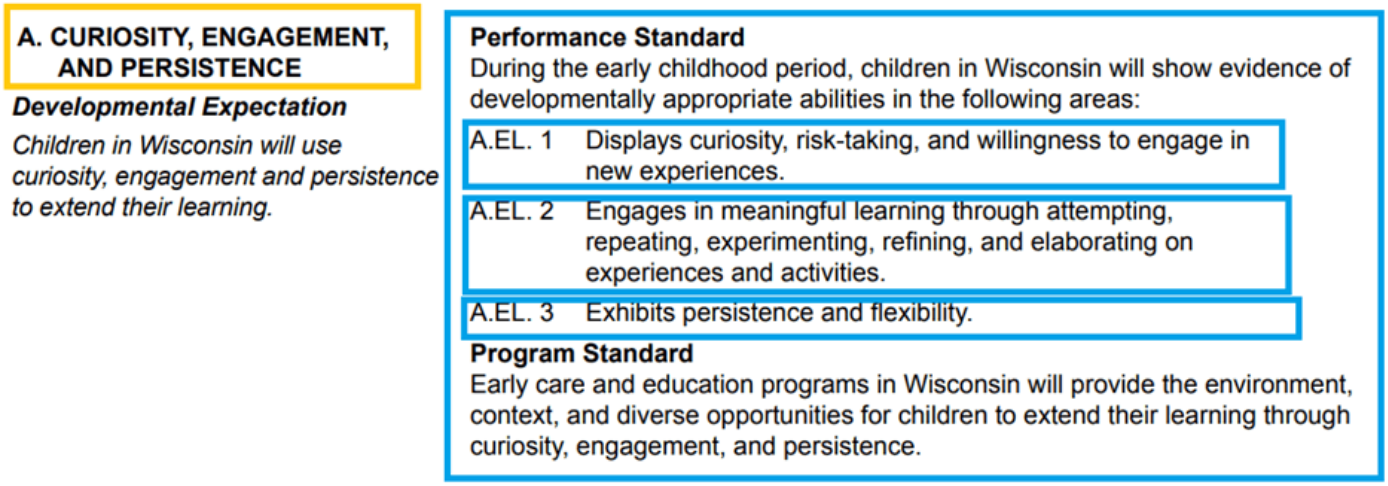
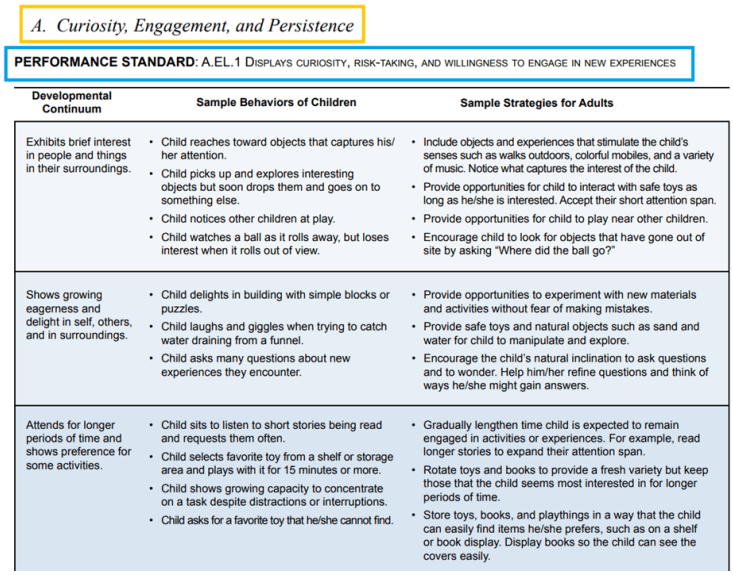


Figure 4.5.5: Example of Performance Standards

Performance Standards can be found in the introductions for each section, but they are also listed in **BOLD PRINT** at the top of each page in the section they align with. For example, this is a portion of the page for The Approaches to Learning Domain, showing the Sub-Domain, A. Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence, which you will see circled in orange. The **Performance Standard A.EL.1 Displays curiosity, risk-taking, and willingness to engage in new experiences** is in **BOLD PRINT** at the top of the page and is circled in **BLUE**.



A. Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence

PERFORMANCE STANDARD: A.EL.1 DISPLAYS CURIOSITY, RISK-TAKING, AND WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN NEW EXPERIENCES

Developmental Continuum	Sample Behaviors of Children	Sample Strategies for Adults
Exhibits brief interest in people and things in their surroundings.	• Child reaches toward objects that captures his/her attention. • Child picks up and explores interesting objects but soon drops them and goes on to something else. • Child notices other children at play. • Child watches a ball as it rolls away, but loses interest when it rolls out of view.	• Include objects and experiences that stimulate the child's senses such as walks outdoors, colorful mobiles, and a variety of music. Notice what captures the interest of the child. • Provide opportunities for child to interact with safe toys as long as he/she is interested. Accept their short attention span. • Provide opportunities for child to play near other children. • Encourage child to look for objects that have gone out of site by asking "Where did the ball go?"
Shows growing eagerness and delight in self, others, and in surroundings.	• Child delights in building with simple blocks or puzzles. • Child laughs and giggles when trying to catch water draining from a funnel. • Child asks many questions about new experiences they encounter.	• Provide opportunities to experiment with new materials and activities without fear of making mistakes. • Provide safe toys and natural objects such as sand and water for child to manipulate and explore. • Encourage the child's natural inclination to ask questions and to wonder. Help him/her refine questions and think of ways he/she might gain answers.
Attends for longer periods of time and shows preference for some activities.	• Child sits to listen to short stories being read and requests them often. • Child selects favorite toy from a shelf or storage area and plays with it for 15 minutes or more. • Child shows growing capacity to concentrate on a task despite distractions or interruptions. • Child asks for a favorite toy that he/she cannot find.	• Gradually lengthen time child is expected to remain engaged in activities or experiences. For example, read longer stories to expand their attention span. • Rotate toys and books to provide a fresh variety but keep those that the child seems most interested in for longer periods of time. • Store toys, books, and playthings in a way that the child can easily find items he/she prefers, such as on a shelf or book display. Display books so the child can see the covers easily.

Figure 4.5.6: Example of performance standard at top of page

Developmental Continuum

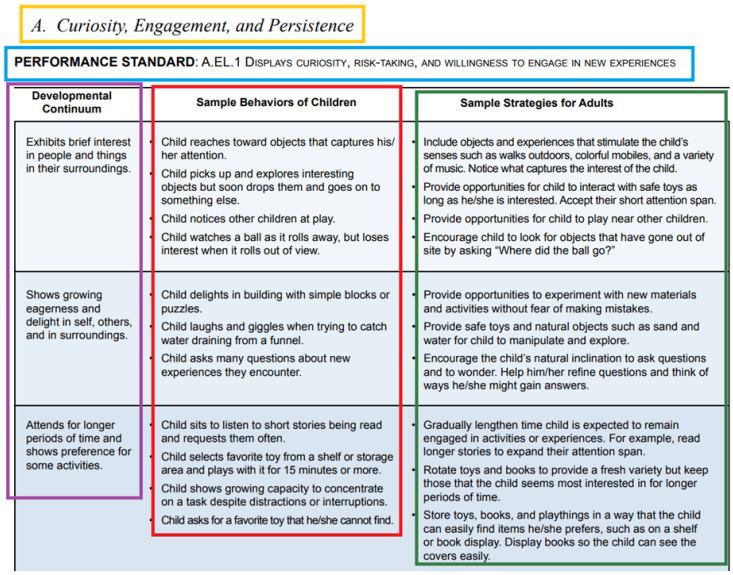
This describes the predictable sequence of developmental accomplishments, outlining progressive levels of performance from early development through kindergarten. The Developmental Continuum levels of performance start at the top and go down the left-hand column of the page. They are circled in **PURPLE**.

Sample Behaviors of Children

Observable examples of children's behaviors at each level of the developmental continuum are provided. These samples are not exhaustive but illustrate typical behaviors. The Sample Behaviors of the Children start at the top and go down the middle column of the page. They are circled in **RED.**

Sample Strategies for Adults

Examples of adult strategies to support children's learning at each developmental level are included. These samples are not comprehensive but offer guidance. The Sample Behaviors of the Adults is at the top and go down the right-hand column of the page. They are circled in **GREEN.**



A. Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence

PERFORMANCE STANDARD: A.EL.1 Displays curiosity, risk-taking, and willingness to engage in new experiences

Developmental Continuum	Sample Behaviors of Children	Sample Strategies for Adults
Exhibits brief interest in people and things in their surroundings.	• Child reaches toward objects that captures his/her attention. • Child picks up and explores interesting objects but soon drops them and goes on to something else. • Child notices other children at play. • Child watches a ball as it rolls away, but loses interest when it rolls out of view.	• Include objects and experiences that stimulate the child's senses such as walks outdoors, colorful mobiles, and a variety of music. Notice what captures the interest of the child. • Provide opportunities for child to interact with safe toys as long as he/she is interested. Accept their short attention span. • Provide opportunities for child to play near other children. • Encourage child to look for objects that have gone out of site by asking "Where did the ball go?"
Shows growing eagerness and delight in self, others, and in surroundings.	• Child delights in building with simple blocks or puzzles. • Child laughs and giggles when trying to catch water draining from a funnel. • Child asks many questions about new experiences they encounter.	• Provide opportunities to experiment with new materials and activities without fear of making mistakes. • Provide safe toys and natural objects such as sand and water for child to manipulate and explore. • Encourage the child's natural inclination to ask questions and to wonder. Help him/her refine questions and think of ways he/she might gain answers.
Attends for longer periods of time and shows preference for some activities.	• Child sits to listen to short stories being read and requests them often. • Child selects favorite toy from a shelf or storage area and plays with it for 15 minutes or more. • Child shows growing capacity to concentrate on a task despite distractions or interruptions. • Child asks for a favorite toy that he/she cannot find.	• Gradually lengthen time child is expected to remain engaged in activities or experiences. For example, read longer stories to expand their attention span. • Rotate toys and books to provide a fresh variety but keep those that the child seems most interested in for longer periods of time. • Store toys, books, and playthings in a way that the child can easily find items he/she prefers, such as on a shelf or book display. Display books so the child can see the covers easily.

Figure 4.5.7: Example of Developmental Continuum (in purple), Sample Behaviors of Children (in red), and Sample Strategies for Adults (in green)

Program Standards

These standards outline what programs must do to ensure children have the necessary opportunities and experiences to meet developmental expectations.

Curriculum and Assessment

Programs and services can choose their own curriculum and assessment methods based on the standards and local expectations. This selection is a local decision.

Incorporating the WMELS Framework into Social Studies Learning Plans

Integrating the WMELS framework into social studies learning plans can be highly effective in promoting comprehensive development in young children. You will remember from Chapter 4, we discussed the NCSS Social Studies Framework, consisting of 10 themes of study. A more accessible way for children to learn Social Studies concepts is to break those 10 themes down further into 5 themes or topics that are closest to the child. Below are strategies for utilizing each developmental domain and sub-domain, organized by the five themes from "Social Studies and Me" by Sally Anderson, and aligned with the NCSS framework. You will see each of the 5 themes and how each of the WMELS Domains and Sub-Domains aligns with the theme.

Theme 1: I Am a Person



Objective: Children will learn about themselves, their feelings, and their personal identity.

Health and Physical Development

1. **Physical Health and Development**: Encourage activities that promote self-care and healthy habits, such as brushing teeth and washing hands.
2. **Motor Development**: Plan activities that enhance fine and gross motor skills, such as drawing self-portraits or engaging in physical exercises.
3. **Sensory Organization**: Use sensory activities to help children explore their senses, such as identifying different textures or smells.

Social and Emotional Development

1. **Emotional Development**: Help children recognize and express their emotions through activities like emotion charts or storytelling.
2. **Social Competence**: Foster social skills by encouraging children to share their feelings and listen to others.
3. **Self-Concept**: Support children in developing a sense of identity by exploring their likes, dislikes, and personal traits.

Language Development and Communication

1. **Listening and Understanding**: Use storytelling and listening activities to help children understand themselves and their emotions.
2. **Speaking and Communicating**: Encourage children to talk about themselves and share their experiences.
3. **Early Literacy**: Use books and writing activities that focus on self-awareness and personal identity.

Approaches to Learning

1. **Curiosity and Initiative**: Promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging children to ask questions about themselves and their feelings.
2. **Engagement and Persistence**: Plan projects that require sustained effort, such as creating a personal scrapbook.
3. **Creativity and Problem-Solving**: Use creative activities like drawing, building, or dramatizing personal experiences to foster problem-solving skills.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. **Exploration and Discovery**: Provide opportunities for children to explore their personal traits and interests through hands-on activities.
2. **Mathematical Thinking**: Incorporate activities that involve counting and measuring personal items, such as height and weight.
3. **Scientific Thinking**: Encourage children to observe and experiment with their senses and personal traits.

Theme 2: Families



Objective: Children will learn about their families and the roles of family members.

Health and Physical Development

1. **Physical Health and Development**: Discuss healthy habits and routines within families, such as meal times and exercise.
2. **Motor Development**: Plan activities that involve family-related crafts, such as creating family trees.
3. **Sensory Organization**: Use sensory activities to explore family traditions, such as tasting foods from family recipes.

Social and Emotional Development

1. **Emotional Development**: Help children understand family relationships and express their feelings about family members.
2. **Social Competence**: Foster social skills by encouraging children to share stories about their families and listen to others.
3. **Self-Concept**: Support children in developing a sense of identity by exploring their family heritage and traditions.

Language Development and Communication

1. **Listening and Understanding**: Use storytelling and listening activities to help children learn about family roles and relationships.
2. **Speaking and Communicating**: Encourage children to talk about their families and share family traditions.
3. **Early Literacy**: Use books and writing activities that focus on family stories and heritage.

Approaches to Learning

1. **Curiosity and Initiative**: Promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging children to ask questions about their families and traditions.

2. **Engagement and Persistence**: Plan projects that require sustained effort, such as creating a family album.
3. **Creativity and Problem-Solving**: Use creative activities like drawing, building, or dramatizing family traditions to foster problem-solving skills.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. **Exploration and Discovery**: Provide opportunities for children to explore their family heritage and traditions through hands-on activities.
2. **Mathematical Thinking**: Incorporate activities that involve counting and measuring family-related items, such as the number of family members.
3. **Scientific Thinking**: Encourage children to observe and experiment with family traditions and routines.

Theme 3: Friends



Objective: Children will learn about friendship and the importance of social relationships.

Health and Physical Development

1. **Physical Health and Development**: Discuss healthy habits and routines that friends can share, such as playing sports together.
2. **Motor Development**: Plan activities that involve cooperative games and physical exercises with friends.
3. **Sensory Organization**: Use sensory activities to explore friendship, such as sharing favorite foods or playing sensory games.

Social and Emotional Development

1. **Emotional Development**: Help children understand the emotions involved in friendships and express their feelings about friends.
2. **Social Competence**: Foster social skills by encouraging children to share stories about their friends and listen to others.
3. **Self-Concept**: Support children in developing a sense of identity by exploring their friendships and social interactions.

Language Development and Communication

1. **Listening and Understanding**: Use storytelling and listening activities to help children learn about friendship and social relationships.
2. **Speaking and Communicating**: Encourage children to talk about their friends and share friendship experiences.

3. **Early Literacy**: Use books and writing activities that focus on friendship stories and social interactions.

Approaches to Learning

1. **Curiosity and Initiative**: Promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging children to ask questions about friendships and social interactions.
2. **Engagement and Persistence**: Plan projects that require sustained effort, such as creating a friendship book.
3. **Creativity and Problem-Solving**: Use creative activities like drawing, building, or dramatizing friendship experiences to foster problem-solving skills.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. **Exploration and Discovery**: Provide opportunities for children to explore their friendships through hands-on activities.
2. **Mathematical Thinking**: Incorporate activities that involve counting and measuring friendship-related items, such as the number of friends in a group.
3. **Scientific Thinking**: Encourage children to observe and experiment with social interactions and friendships.

Theme 4: Communities



Objective: Children will learn about their community, the roles of community members, and how they contribute to society.

Health and Physical Development

1. **Physical Health and Development**: Discuss healthy habits and routines within the community, such as community sports and wellness programs.
2. **Motor Development**: Plan activities that involve community-related crafts, such as building models of community buildings.
3. **Sensory Organization**: Use sensory activities to explore community traditions, such as tasting foods from local festivals.

Social and Emotional Development

1. **Emotional Development**: Help children understand community relationships and express their feelings about community members.
2. **Social Competence**: Foster social skills by encouraging children to share stories about their community and listen to others.
3. **Self-Concept**: Support children in developing a sense of identity by exploring their role within the community.

Language Development and Communication

1. **Listening and Understanding**: Use storytelling and listening activities to help children learn about community roles and relationships.
2. **Speaking and Communicating**: Encourage children to talk about their community and share community traditions.
3. **Early Literacy**: Use books and writing activities that focus on community stories and heritage.

Approaches to Learning

1. **Curiosity and Initiative**: Promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging children to ask questions about their community and traditions.
2. **Engagement and Persistence**: Plan projects that require sustained effort, such as creating a community map.
3. **Creativity and Problem-Solving**: Use creative activities like drawing, building, or dramatizing community experiences to foster problem-solving skills.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. **Exploration and Discovery**: Provide opportunities for children to explore their community heritage and traditions through hands-on activities.
2. **Mathematical Thinking**: Incorporate activities that involve counting and measuring community-related items, such as the number of community buildings.
3. **Scientific Thinking**: Encourage children to observe and experiment with community traditions and routines.

Theme 5: The Big World



Objective: Children will learn about the broader world, including different cultures, environments, and global connections.

Health and Physical Development

1. **Physical Health and Development**: Discuss healthy habits and routines from different cultures, such as traditional exercises and diets.
2. **Motor Development**: Plan activities that involve global crafts, such as creating models of famous landmarks.
3. **Sensory Organization**: Use sensory activities to explore global traditions, such as tasting foods from different countries.

Social and Emotional Development

1. **Emotional Development**: Help children understand global relationships and express their feelings about different cultures.
2. **Social Competence**: Foster social skills by encouraging children to share stories about their global experiences and listen to others.
3. **Self-Concept**: Support children in developing a sense of identity by exploring their place in the global community.

Language Development and Communication

1. **Listening and Understanding**: Use storytelling and listening activities to help children learn about global roles and relationships.
2. **Speaking and Communicating**: Encourage children to talk about their global experiences and share global traditions.
3. **Early Literacy**: Use books and writing activities that focus on global stories and heritage.

Approaches to Learning

1. **Curiosity and Initiative**: Promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging children to ask questions about the world and different cultures.
2. **Engagement and Persistence**: Plan projects that require sustained effort, such as creating a world map.
3. **Creativity and Problem-Solving**: Use creative activities like drawing, building, or dramatizing global experiences to foster problem-solving skills.

Cognition and General Knowledge

1. **Exploration and Discovery**: Provide opportunities for children to explore global heritage and traditions through hands-on activities.
2. **Mathematical Thinking**: Incorporate activities that involve counting and measuring global-related items, such as the number of countries.
3. **Scientific Thinking**: Encourage children to observe and experiment with global traditions and routines.

Conclusion

By incorporating these activities and lessons, teachers can ensure that they cover all essential themes in early childhood social studies. This approach supports children's curiosity and learning about their world, fostering a comprehensive understanding of self, identity, feelings, families, friends, communities, community helpers, the big world, and diversity.

Application of the WMELS Framework

Applying the WMELS Framework to your learning experience plans can be done in several easy steps.

1. Understand the WMELS Domains

Review the WMELS Domains: Familiarize yourself with the five developmental domains: **Physical Development**, **Social and Emotional Development**, **Language Development**, **Cognitive Development**, and **Approaches to Learning**.

Identify relevant standards within each domain that align with the goals of your lesson plan.

After understanding the developmental domains outlined in WMELS, the next crucial step is to set clear learning objectives. These objectives should align with the specific outcomes detailed in WMELS, ensuring that each lesson plan promotes developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and individualized learning experiences for children. By establishing well-defined objectives, educators can create a structured roadmap that guides the teaching process and supports children's holistic development.

2. Set Clear Learning Objectives

Align Objectives with WMELS: Your learning objectives should reflect the specific outcomes outlined in WMELS. For example, if your lesson is about storytelling, you might focus on **Language Development**, specifically early literacy skills or vocabulary building.

Be Developmentally Appropriate: Ensure that the objectives are suitable for the developmental stages of the children you're working with. For instance, toddlers might focus on listening skills, while preschoolers could be encouraged to narrate their own stories.

With clear learning objectives in place, the focus shifts to designing engaging and meaningful activities that cater to the developmental stages of the children. These activities should incorporate developmentally appropriate strategies, hands-on, play-based learning, and culturally responsive practices. By thoughtfully planning activities that align with the WMELS framework, educators can foster an inclusive and stimulating learning environment that encourages children to explore, discover, and grow.

3. Design Engaging, Meaningful Activities

- **Incorporate Developmentally Appropriate Strategies**: Choose activities that match the children's developmental levels. For example, activities like sensory exploration can promote **Physical Development**, while cooperative play can support **Social and Emotional Development**.
- **Encourage Hands-On, Play-Based Learning**: WMELS emphasizes the importance of play in early learning. Activities such as building with blocks, dramatic play, or nature exploration can support multiple domains, such as cognitive development and approaches to learning.
- **Culturally Responsive Practices**: Incorporate diverse materials, themes, and perspectives that reflect the children's backgrounds. This can be especially important for fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Once the activities are designed, it's essential to integrate the key developmental domains into the lesson plans. This integration ensures that all aspects of a child's development—physical, social, and emotional, language, cognitive, and approaches to learning—are addressed. By weaving these domains into the activities, educators can provide a balanced and comprehensive learning experience that supports children's overall growth and development.

4. Integrate the Key Domains

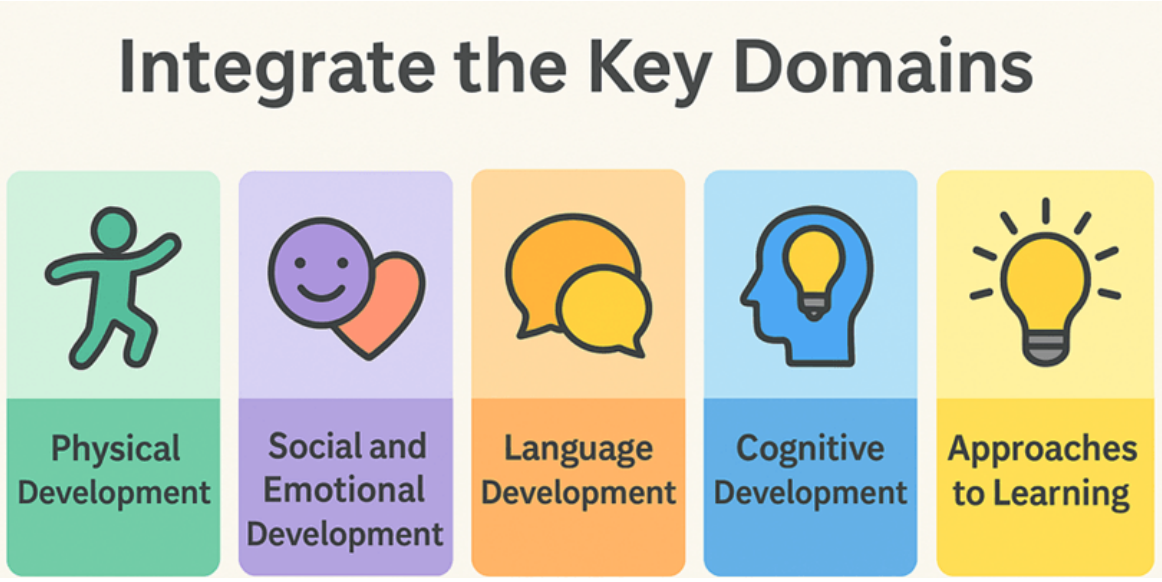


Figure 4.5.8: Integrating the Key Domains

- **Physical Development**: Plan activities that involve movement, coordination, and fine motor skills (e.g., cutting, drawing, dancing).
- **Social and Emotional Development**: Create opportunities for children to express and manage their emotions, learn social skills, and practice self-regulation (e.g., group games, storytelling, role-play).

- **Language Development**: Use activities that build listening, speaking, and early literacy skills (e.g., reading books, singing songs, asking open-ended questions).
- **Cognitive Development**: Include problem-solving activities, games that involve counting, sorting, and classifying, and experiments to stimulate curiosity and exploration.
- **Approaches to Learning**: Design activities that promote curiosity, creativity, persistence, and the ability to focus on tasks (e.g., exploration centers, challenges, and interactive experiences).

After integrating the key domains into the lesson plans, ongoing observation and assessment become vital components of the teaching process. Formative assessments and reflective practices help educators monitor children's progress, identify areas for improvement, and adjust future lessons to better support learning outcomes. This continuous cycle of observation and assessment ensures that the educational experiences remain dynamic and responsive to children's needs.

5. Provide Ongoing Observation and Assessment

- **Formative Assessment**: Use observations and documentation to assess how children are meeting the WMELS standards. Are they engaging in the activities? Are they achieving the desired developmental outcomes?
- **Reflection**: After the lesson, reflect on which domains were most addressed, what went well, and how you can adjust future lessons to better support children's learning.

6. Incorporate Family and Community

- **Family Involvement**: WMELS emphasizes the importance of involving families. Consider sending home activities, notes, or suggestions for how families can extend the learning at home.
- **Community Connections**: Include local resources or guest speakers that might enhance children's understanding of the lesson topic (e.g., inviting a community helper to talk about their job).

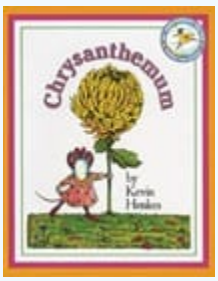
Finally, incorporating family and community involvement is a crucial aspect of the WMELS framework. Engaging families and utilizing community resources enrich the learning experience and create a supportive network for children. By fostering strong connections between the classroom, families, and the community, educators can enhance children's understanding of their world and promote a collaborative approach to early childhood education.

Social Studies Read-Aloud Lesson Plan Example

The lesson plan for *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes is designed to help preschool and early elementary children understand the importance of self-esteem and pride in their names. Through interactive read-aloud sessions and creative activities, children will engage in discussions about their names, how they make them feel, and participate in a name collage activity to express their unique identity. This lesson plan aligns with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) by promoting fine motor skills, reinforcing positive self-concept, developing spoken language and communication skills, encouraging creative expression, and supporting cognitive development through multi-sensory engagement and problem-solving. Review the learning experience plan below to see how to incorporate the WMELS Framework into a plan.

Example Preschool Read-Aloud Learning Experience

Book



Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Age

Preschool and Early Elementary

Objective

Children will understand the importance of self-esteem and pride in their names. They will engage in a discussion about how names make them feel and participate in an interactive name collage activity to express their unique identity.

Materials Needed

- Chrysanthemum book
- Large paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Scissors (optional)
- Glue or tape
- Pre-cut letters or paper for a name collage (optional)
- A list of children's names

Lesson Plan

- Introduction (5 minutes)
  - Gather children in a cozy reading area.
  - Show the book and ask, "What do you think this story will be about?"
  - Introduce the concept of names and why they are special.
  - Ask children if they know the story of how their names were chosen.
- Read-Aloud (10–15 minutes)
  - Read Chrysanthemum aloud, emphasizing key phrases.
  - Pause to ask questions like: "How do you think Chrysanthemum felt when the children teased her about her name?"
  - Encourage children to share their thoughts.
- Discussion (10 minutes)
  - Ask children how they feel about their own names.
  - Discuss the importance of respecting everyone's name.
- Name Collage Activity (15–20 minutes)
  - Give each child a large piece of paper to create a name collage.
  - Encourage creativity and offer questions like: "What color did you use for your first letter?"
- Wrap-Up (5 minutes)
  - Gather children to share their name collages.
  - Review the main points of the story and remind children that every name is special and deserves respect.

Assessment

- Observe children's engagement during the story.
- Assess how children express themselves creatively during the collage activity.
- Provide positive reinforcement for their efforts.

Family Engagement Ideas

- Name Story at Home: Encourage families to share the story of how their child's name was chosen.
- Name Collage Extension: Send home name collage kits.
- Family Name Book: Create a name book with the child.
- "My Name is Special" Chart: Families can create a chart marking things they love about their name.

Review how the WMELS align with the activity of reading the story Chrysanthemum and making a name collage.

Health and Physical Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

A. Physical Health and Development	B. Motor Development	C. Sensory Integration
Performance Standard	Performance Standard: B.EL.2 Exhibits eye-hand coordination, strength, control, and object manipulation	
Developmental Continuum	Uses strength and control to perform complex fine motor tasks.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	The child can control a marker, crayon, or pencil to create some shapes.	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	**Children will Develop Strength and Control:** In the name collage activity, children use scissors, glue, and markers to manipulate materials, developing the strength and control needed for fine motor tasks like cutting, placing, and gluing. **Children will Develop Complex Fine Motor Tasks:** Cutting out letters, controlling the glue stick, and arranging pieces for the collage are complex fine motor tasks that enhance eye-hand coordination and object manipulation.	

Social-Emotional Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Social-Emotional Domain Example for Lesson Plan

A. Emotional Development	B. Self-Concept	C. Social Competence
Performance Standard	B.EL.1 Develops positive self-esteem	
Developmental Continuum	Exhibits positive self-concept and confidence in his/her abilities.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	After painting a picture, the child wants an adult to write a story about it and insists that the picture be put on the refrigerator.	

A. Emotional Development	B. Self-Concept	C. Social Competence
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	**Children will Develop Positive Self-Concept:** Creating a personalized name collage allows children to recognize and showcase their unique identity, reinforcing a positive self-concept. **Children will Develop Confidence in Abilities:** Completing the collage and making choices about materials builds confidence in their abilities, similar to the pride a child feels when asking for their artwork to be displayed.	

Language Development and Communication Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Language Development and Communication Domain Example for Lesson Plan

A. Listening and Understanding	B. Speaking and Communicating	C. Early Literacy
Performance Standard	B.EL.2a Uses vocalizations and spoken language to communicate	
Developmental Continuum	Uses multi-word sentences (parts of speech, word order, and sentence structure) much like that of an adult.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	After hearing his/her favorite story, the child says, “That was a great story. I really liked the part about the boy going on a trip to see his grandmother. It was exciting to hear about how he helped her plant the garden with corn, potatoes, and tomatoes. I think I would like to plant a garden.”	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	**Listening to the Story:** Listening to Chrysanthemum helps children develop vocalizations and spoken language as they engage in conversation about the story. **Using Multi-Word Sentences:** Children use multi-word sentences to express their thoughts about Chrysanthemum and their own names, fitting the developmental continuum. **Name Collage:** During the name collage activity, children express themselves verbally, using language to describe their work and engage in conversations about their names.	

Approaches to Learning Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Approaches to Learning Domain Example for Lesson Plan

A. Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence	B. Creativity and Imagination	C. Diversity in Learning
Performance Standard	B.EL.2 Expresses self creatively through music, movement, and art.	
Developmental Continuum	Explores the process of using a variety of artistic materials, music, and movement.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	Child explores a variety of materials such as glue, colored rice, macaroni, glitter, cotton balls, etc., to create pictures.	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	**Listening to the Story:** The story prompts children to express themselves creatively, setting the foundation for the name collage activity. **Engaging in Creative Expression:** The name collage activity involves using materials like paper, scissors, glue, and markers to form a unique representation of their name, promoting artistic exploration. **Exploration of Art Materials:** Using various materials during the collage-making process encourages children to explore different artistic techniques, enhancing their creative and imaginative skills. **Creative Problem-Solving:** Children face challenges during the collage activity, fostering creative problem-solving and experimentation.	

Cognition and General Knowledge Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Cognition and General Knowledge Domain Example for Lesson Plan

A. Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving	B. Mathematical Thinking	C. Scientific Thinking
Performance Standard	A.EL.1 Uses multi-sensory abilities to process information.	
Developmental Continuum	Uses senses to generalize and apply prior learning.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	Child uses a variety of ways to use crayons, markers, scissors, and paper to create “works of art.”	

A. Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving	B. Mathematical Thinking	C. Scientific Thinking
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	**Listening to the Story:** Engaging with the narrative helps children make connections between what they hear and their understanding of themselves. **Exploring Materials in the Collage:** Using a variety of materials during the name collage activity engages children's multi-sensory abilities to process information and create something meaningful. **Problem Solving with Materials:** Children explore different ways of using materials to achieve their creative goals, applying prior learning to new tasks. **Creativity and Sensory Engagement:** Combining sensory experiences during the activity fosters multi-sensory learning, supporting cognitive and creative development.	

Conclusion

By incorporating the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) framework into lesson plans, educators can ensure that they provide a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate education for young children. The alignment with the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) standards further enhances the effectiveness of these lesson plans, promoting a well-rounded understanding of social studies concepts. Through clear learning objectives, engaging activities, integration of key developmental domains, ongoing observation and assessment, and involvement of families and communities, educators can create a supportive and stimulating learning environment. This approach not only fosters children's physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive, and learning approaches but also prepares them for future academic and social success. By following these guidelines, educators can make a significant impact on children's early learning experiences, laying a strong foundation for their lifelong learning journey.

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4.6: Reflect the Teaching Cycle

Introduction

In Section 4.2, we explored how to create meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging social studies lessons using the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) Teaching Cycle. This cycle begins with observation and includes documentation, reflection, planning, implementation, and review. These steps ensure that teaching remains responsive to children's developmental progress and interests.

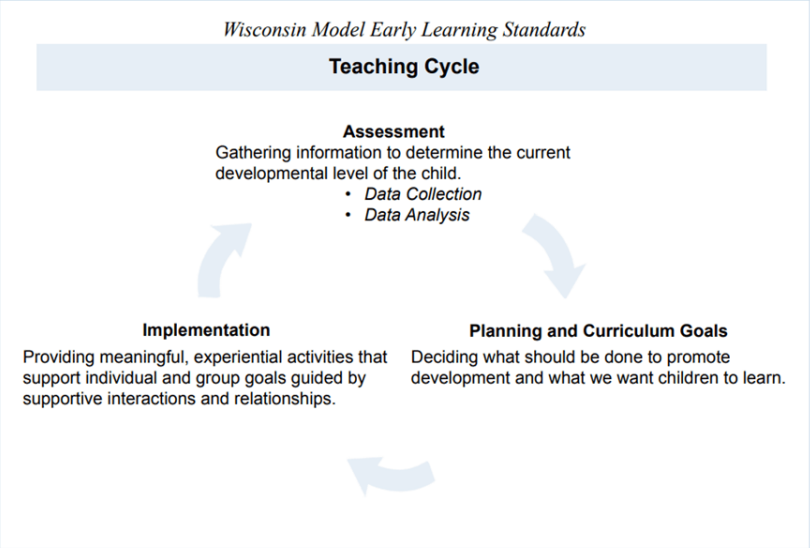


Figure 4.6.1: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: Teaching Cycle

WMELS Teaching Cycle Overview

Observation (Assessment in WMELS Teaching Cycle)

Purpose: Understand children's current skills, interests, and developmental progress.
Key Action: Teachers observe children's play and interactions to gather objective, factual data.
Example: A teacher watches children interact with a snail and documents observations, such as curiosity or empathy.

Documentation

Purpose: Capture evidence of children's behaviors, interactions, and learning.
Key Action: Teachers document observations through anecdotal notes, photos, and work samples.
Example: Children's drawings and notes from a neighborhood exploration help track engagement and development.

Reflection & Planning (Planning & Curriculum Goals in WMELS)

Purpose: Reflect on observations and plan the next steps in learning.
Key Action: Teachers analyze the documented observations to determine the next learning experiences.
Example: If children show interest in community helpers, teachers plan a lesson focused on local occupations.

Implementation (Implementation in WMELS)

Purpose: Put the planned learning experiences into action.
Key Action: Teachers lead the activities, adjusting them as needed based on children's reactions.
Example: Teachers take children on a walk to identify neighborhood buildings, encouraging participation.

Review and Adjust

Purpose: Assess the effectiveness of the activities.
Key Action: Teachers evaluate the impact of the learning experiences and make adjustments for future plans.
Example: After a snail exploration, teachers reflect on how children responded, incorporating their feedback.

Pre-service Education Student Application

A pre-service education student can effectively reflect the WMELS Teaching Cycle in their social studies lesson plans for young children, birth to age 6, by integrating observation, documentation, reflection and planning, implementation, and review and adjustment into their instructional approach.

Observation: During the initial phase, the student observes the children's interactions and engagement with social studies content. For example, they might watch how children respond to a story about community helpers or a simple discussion about family roles, noting their curiosity, questions, and any emerging interests.

Documentation: Next, the student documents these observations through various means such as anecdotal notes, photographs, or children's work samples. This documentation serves as evidence of the children's learning processes and helps track their developmental progress. For instance, capturing children's drawings of their families or notes from a class discussion can provide insights into their understanding and interests.

Reflection & Planning: Using the documented observations, the student reflects on the children's learning experiences and plans subsequent activities. This involves analyzing the collected data to identify patterns and areas for further exploration. If children show a keen interest in community helpers, the student might plan a lesson that includes role-playing different community roles or inviting a local firefighter to visit the classroom.

Implementation: The student then implements the planned activities, leading the class through engaging and interactive social studies experiences. They adjust the activities based on the children's reactions and feedback, ensuring that the learning experiences are meaningful and responsive to the children's needs. For example, if children are particularly engaged in a pretend play activity about community helpers, the student might extend the activity to include more props and scenarios.

Review and Adjust: Finally, the student reviews the effectiveness of the implemented activities by evaluating the children's engagement and learning outcomes. They make necessary adjustments to future lesson plans based on this evaluation. For instance, after a lesson on community helpers, the student might reflect on the children's responses and decide to incorporate more hands-on activities or field trips to enhance understanding.

By systematically applying the WMELS Teaching Cycle, pre-service education students can create dynamic and responsive social studies lesson plans that cater to the developmental needs and interests of young children, fostering their curiosity and understanding of the world around them.

Preschool Vignette: Exploring Our Neighborhood

- **Observation:** Ms. Lara observes children discussing different kinds of buildings around the school.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lara records observations and takes photos of children pretending to be community helpers.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lara plans a social studies lesson focusing on "Our Neighborhoods" and community helpers.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lara organizes a walk around the neighborhood, encouraging children to ask questions and share observations.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lara reflects on the children's excitement about the fire station and plans the next lesson to dive deeper into the role of firefighters.

Toddler Vignette: Discovering Community Helpers

- **Observation:** Ms. Emily observes toddlers mimicking actions they've seen adults perform.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Emily documents the children's behaviors by taking photos and writing down their actions.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Emily plans a hands-on activity introducing toddlers to various roles within their community.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Emily sets up a "Community Helper Station" with props and invites toddlers to participate in pretend play scenarios.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Emily reflects on the toddlers' engagement and plans future activities based on their interests.

Infant Vignette: Exploring Our Family and Friends

- **Observation:** Ms. Lily observes infants drawn to photos or small toys representing family members.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lily takes photos and notes the infants' responses to the family-related materials.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lily plans an activity centered on "Our Family and Friends" to support early social awareness.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lily sets up a "Family and Friends" activity area with soft toys and family photos.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lily reflects on the infants' responses and plans future activities to deepen their understanding of family and relationships.

Conclusion

The WMELS Teaching Cycle provides a structured framework for designing social studies lessons that are responsive to children's developmental needs and interests. By following the cycle of observation, documentation, reflection, planning, implementation, and review, teachers can create learning experiences that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate. This cyclical process ensures that teaching is continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of children, fostering a supportive and dynamic learning environment.

Through the vignettes provided, we see practical examples of how the WMELS Teaching Cycle can be applied to various age groups, from infants to preschoolers. Each vignette demonstrates the importance of observing children's interests, documenting their behaviors, reflecting on their developmental progress, planning meaningful activities, implementing those activities, and reviewing their effectiveness. By adhering to this cycle, teachers can ensure that their lessons are not only educational but also tailored to the unique needs and interests of each child.

In summary, the WMELS Teaching Cycle is a valuable tool for educators, helping them to create lessons that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging. By continuously observing, documenting, reflecting, planning, implementing, and reviewing, teachers can support children's growth and development holistically and responsibly.

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5: ART LEARNING EXPERIENCES

5.1: Creating Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Art Learning Experiences
5.2: Creating Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Art Learning Experiences
5.3: Effective Transitions for Art Experiences
5.4: Incorporating the WMELS Framework into Art Learning Experiences
5.5: Planning Art Experiences Using the WMELS Teaching Cycle

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5.1: Creating Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Art Learning Experiences

In Chapter 4, we explored how to create lessons in social studies that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging for young children. Now, we will shift our focus to applying these same principles to art activities. Art lessons, like social studies, should align with developmental domains to foster a holistic approach to child development, integrating physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and creative growth. Below, you will review the developmental domains for the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), and you will explore how developmental domains align with art activities.

Using Relevant Developmental Domains in Art Learning Experiences

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/ TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

Figure 5.1.1: Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), also referred to as the ELOF. (Child Development)



Figure 5.1.2: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Domains

1. Physical Development (WMELS Health and Physical Domain)



Art activities involving manipulating materials and tools help children refine fine motor skills while expressing themselves creatively. For example, activities like cutting, gluing, and painting promote physical development while encouraging exploration of textures and materials.

Example: A textured collage activity where children use fabric, paper, and other materials to create artwork. Fine motor skill development is supported through the process of gluing, cutting, and arranging these materials.

2. Social-Emotional Development (WMELS Social and Emotional Development Domain)



Art supports self-expression, collaboration, and the understanding of emotions. By engaging in group art activities, children learn valuable social skills like cooperation, turn-taking, and emotional expression.

Example: A group mural project where children contribute their own artistic elements to a shared artwork. This activity fosters social skills while encouraging emotional expression through creative art.

3. Language Development (WMELS Language Development and Communication Domain)



Art often involves storytelling, discussion, and vocabulary building, which are crucial for language development. Art activities encourage children to describe their artwork, explaining their process and engaging in conversations about their creations.

Example: A clay sculpting activity where children create animals or objects and then describe their creations to the class. This encourages the use of new vocabulary and sentence structures, enhancing language development.

4. Creative and Aesthetic Development (WMELS Approaches to Learning Domain)



Art activities inherently foster creativity and aesthetic development. These activities provide children the freedom to explore materials and techniques, allowing them to express their own creative ideas and problem-solving abilities.

Example: A free-choice art station where children experiment with various mediums, such as watercolors, crayons, and pastels, encourages self-expression and fosters creative development.

5. Cognitive Development (WMELS Cognition and General Knowledge Domain)



Art activities challenge children to think critically, solve problems, and express ideas visually. These activities stimulate creativity and encourage cognitive processing, especially in how children think about color, shape, and form.

Example: A painting activity where children create landscapes representing different times of the day. This promotes cognitive development as children categorize and reason about their visual choices, fostering understanding of concepts like color, light, and time

6. Cultural and Linguistic Development



Art activities that explore diverse cultural traditions and artistic practices help foster cultural appreciation and linguistic development. These activities are personally meaningful and culturally enriching.

Example: An exploration of Indigenous art, where children learn about weaving or beadwork, followed by creating their versions of these artworks. This encourages cultural appreciation while integrating storytelling and language from the cultures being studied.

Creating Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Art Learning Experiences



Figure 5.1.3: Relevance, Meaningfulness, and Challenge

While it is essential to align developmental domains with art activities, educators should also follow a planning cycle to ensure the lessons are meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and engaging. To create art lessons that are both meaningful and developmentally appropriate, educators should use the cycle of observation, documentation, reflection, planning, and implementation. By observing children's interests and developmental stages, educators can tailor art activities that are not only engaging but also appropriately challenging, ensuring that the lessons are aligned with the children's needs and interests. Review the Teaching Cycle images below.

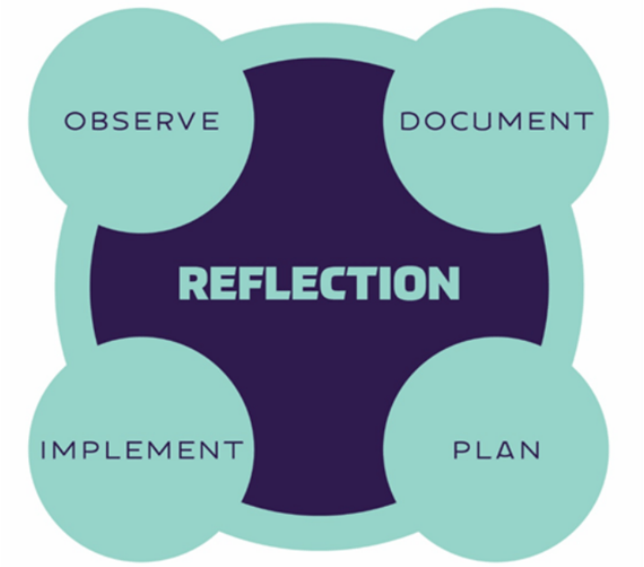


Figure 5.1.4: Curriculum Planning Cycle

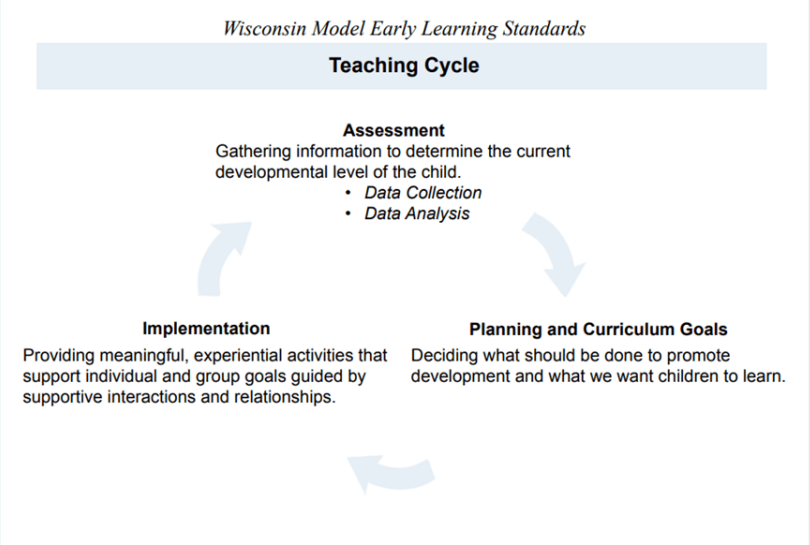


Figure 5.1.5: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

Steps for Planning Art Lessons:

1. **Observation**: Observe children's current interests and skill levels to identify materials and activities that will engage them meaningfully.
2. **Documentation**: Record observations to track individual and group dynamics. This helps in planning lessons that meet children's needs and in tracking progress.
3. **Reflection**: Reflect on how children respond to art activities. Evaluate whether the activities are appropriately challenging and adjust accordingly.
4. **Planning**: Plan art activities that connect to children's real-world experiences and interests. Choose materials and processes that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate.
5. **Implementation**: Introduce the activity with clear instructions, allowing children to explore and experiment while ensuring the process is accessible and enjoyable.

Preschool Art Experience Example: My Neighborhood Collage



Objective: Children create a collage representing their neighborhood, developing fine motor skills, creativity, and spatial awareness.

Materials: Construction paper, magazine cut-outs, glue sticks, scissors, markers, stickers, textured materials (fabric, cotton balls), butcher paper.

Process: After a discussion about neighborhoods, children select materials to depict elements like houses, parks, and people. They cut, glue, and arrange pieces on butcher paper, expressing their understanding of community and refining motor skills.

Planning Steps for My Neighborhood Collage

Planning Cycle Steps	Alignment to 'My Neighborhood Collage'
1. Observation	Observe children's conversations and play about places like homes, parks, stores, and schools. Notice fine motor abilities with scissors, markers, and glue.
2. Documentation	Record children's comments about their neighborhoods and document motor skill use. Use notes, photos, or video clips to capture individual and group interests and skills.
3. Reflection	Reflect on children's engagement and skill levels: Are they able to express neighborhood ideas? Are motor tasks manageable? Adjust support and materials if needed.
4. Planning	Plan collage activities that incorporate familiar neighborhood elements children have mentioned. Offer a variety of textured materials and pre-cut options for different skill levels. Scaffold for those who need support.
5. Implementation	Introduce the collage with a group discussion. Model choosing and arranging materials. Encourage exploration and creativity. Support children as needed while promoting independence.

Toddler Art Experience Example: My Helpers Around Me



Objective: Toddlers explore community helpers by creating an art project, promoting social-emotional learning and motor skills development.

Materials: Large mural paper, crayons, pre-cut pictures of community helpers, fabric scraps, glue sticks.

Process: Toddlers add pictures and textures to a mural representing community helpers like firefighters and doctors, learning about their roles and practicing fine motor skills through gluing and arranging.

Planning Steps for Community Helpers Mural

Planning Cycle Steps	Alignment to 'Community Helpers Mural'
1. Observation	Observe toddlers' interests in community helpers through play, books, and conversations. Note fine motor skills like grasping crayons or applying glue.
2. Documentation	Record toddlers' comments and actions related to community helpers. Document motor skills and interactions during art activities.
3. Reflection	Reflect on toddlers' engagement with community helper themes and their motor skill development. Adjust materials or the level of support as needed.
4. Planning	Plan the mural activity using community helper pictures that toddlers recognize. Select materials that are easy to grasp and manipulate, and prepare spaces that encourage collaborative work.
5. Implementation	Introduce the mural with a simple explanation about community helpers. Encourage toddlers to select, place, and glue pictures and textures onto the mural. Provide support and praise efforts to foster confidence and skills.

Infant Art Experience Example: Exploring Textures of My World



Objective: Infants explore different textures to support sensory development and introduce basic concepts of community.

Materials: Soft fabric squares, natural objects (leaves, stones), colorful textured paper, baby-safe mirror, plush community helper toys.

Process: Infants engage with textures and explore the concept of community by interacting with soft toys representing helpers (e.g., firefighters, doctors). They explore textures while bonding with caregivers and starting to recognize themselves in a social context

Planning Steps for Exploring Textures of My World

Planning Cycle Steps	Alignment to 'Exploring Textures of My World'
1. Observation	Observe infants' sensory responses to different textures and objects. Note their engagement, preferences, and interactions with caregivers and materials.
2. Documentation	Record infants' tactile exploration, facial expressions, and interactions with the materials and caregivers. Use photos or notes to capture developmental milestones.
3. Reflection	Reflect on infants' sensory engagement, preferences for certain textures, and social interactions. Adjust materials or interactions to match developmental needs.
4. Planning	Select a variety of textures and community-related plush toys based on observed interests and developmental levels. Ensure materials are safe and accessible for exploration.

Planning Cycle Steps	Alignment to 'Exploring Textures of My World'
5. Implementation	Set up a safe, inviting space with diverse textures and community helper toys. Support infants' exploration through gentle encouragement and verbal interaction, fostering sensory development and early social understanding.

By aligning developmental domains with art activities, educators ensure that children engage in meaningful, interdisciplinary learning. These activities foster creativity, fine motor skills, language development, and an understanding of cultural diversity. Using the planning cycle of observation, documentation, reflection, and implementation, educators can create art lessons that are developmentally appropriate and personally relevant for each child.

To further enrich our understanding of creating relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging art learning experiences, it is essential to consider the foundational role of creative arts in early childhood development. The creative arts, encompassing visual art, music, drama, and dance, provide natural avenues for children to express themselves and develop critical skills. Integrating these disciplines into our art activities can enhance the developmental domains we aim to support, fostering a holistic approach to child development.

Introduction to the Creative Arts

The creative arts are as natural to young children's lives as language and play are. The arts build skills such as problem solving and critical thinking; they bring parallel opportunities for the development of language/communication, mathematics, and the development of social and interpersonal skills. The following activities are often referred to as children's play: scribbling with a crayon, pretending to be a pirate or a bird, humming bits of a tune, banging on a drum, or swaying to music. But these behaviors show elements of artistic expression and creation that support the continuous development of artistic skills. They also show the hallmarks of children's abilities to express themselves through symbols and aesthetic images.[1]

The creative arts domain is presented in four familiar disciplines:

Table 5.1.1*: Creative Arts Disciplines*

Examples of Art	Types of Art
 Figure 5.1.5[2]	**Visual Art**: The visual arts include the practice of drawing, painting, sculpting, and assembling collages in two or three dimensions. Preschool visual art is process-based and open-ended, allowing children to explore by using a variety of materials. The product is not the focus, though the children will likely view their creation as a masterpiece!

Examples of Art	Types of Art
 Figure 5.1.6[3]	**Music:** Preschoolers love to listen to music as well as sing along and move with music. Music learning in preschool is a time to make new discoveries. Preschoolers can engage in music making, performing rhythms, musical sounds, and passages with a variety of instruments, or simply sing along to a favorite tune.
 Figure 5.1.7[4]	**Drama**: For preschoolers, this domain involves both spontaneous dramatic play and teacher-structured drama, each of which inspires the other. Preschoolers are naturally inclined to engage in solitary, parallel, and group play and draw on these experiences when acting out situations and using props (with teacher guidance). Similarly, engaging in drama feeds children's imagination and inspires dramatic play. A goal in dramatic play and drama for preschoolers is unleashing the child's imagination. Thus, the focus is on children's creative engagement in drama rather than on actual performance or "the theater."
 Figure 5.1.8[5]	**Dance:** The dance domain for preschoolers is interested in the creative and often expressive use of movement. Movement is explored in all its range (e.g., small and large, fast or slow, hopping or marching) and for various purposes, such as learning math or language skills, or for the joy of moving. Dance can be a nonverbal tool for expressing ideas, telling stories, or communicating emotions. It is often rhythmic and accompanied by music. Requiring thinking, social interaction, and physical exercise, dance is a motivating way for preschoolers to engage in learning.

The specific foundations, which are the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that preschool children typically develop in a quality preschool environment as they relate to visual art, music, drama, and dance, are included later in the chapter as each strand is explored.[6]

The Value of Creative Arts

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define creative development in the context of early childhood education and explain its significance in fostering children's cognitive, emotional, and social growth.
- Identify key factors that influence creative development in young children, such as exploration, problem-solving, and expression through various media and activities.
- Explain the process of creative development in young children, highlighting the stages of exploration, experimentation, and expression.
- Describe how early childhood educators can support and nurture the creative process by providing opportunities for hands-on learning, open-ended activities, and encouragement of independent thinking.

Creativity refers to the *process through which individuals cultivate and express their creativity, imagination, and originality* (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016). It encompasses the ability to generate novel ideas, think outside the box, and engage in artistic, innovative, or imaginative activities.

The most common outlets of creative development in early childhood are related to:

- the visual arts (painting, 3-D sculptures with clay or play-dough, drawing, collage, etc.),
- music and movement, and
- dramatic arts (storytelling, use of props, etc.).

Creativity Across All Domains of Learning

However, creative development is not limited to artistic pursuits but extends to problem-solving, critical thinking, and the exploration of new possibilities in various domains. Encouraging children to engage in creative activities stimulates their cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development, fostering qualities such as curiosity, flexibility, resilience, and self-expression.

Creative Meets Cognitive Development

Expression and Communication: Creative activities such as drawing, painting, storytelling, and role-playing provide children with avenues to express themselves and communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Through these activities, children develop language skills, vocabulary, and the ability to articulate their experiences, enhancing their communication abilities.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Engaging in creative tasks challenges children to think critically, explore possibilities, and find solutions to problems. Whether it's building with blocks or inventing stories, creative activities stimulate cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, fostering problem-solving skills and strategic thinking.



Figure 5.1.9: "Cross Play in Preschool" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA.

Imagination and Innovation: Creative development encourages children to tap into their imagination, think imaginatively, and envision new ideas and possibilities. Imaginative play, fantasy stories, and pretend scenarios allow children to explore different perspectives, create imaginary worlds, and develop innovative thinking skills that are essential for adapting to new situations and generating novel ideas.

Creative Meets Social & Emotional Development

Emotional Regulation and Self-Expression: Creative activities provide children with outlets for emotional expression, helping them understand and regulate their emotions. Artistic endeavors, music, dance, and drama allow children to explore their feelings, express themselves authentically, and develop emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-awareness.

Collaboration and Social Skills: Engaging in collaborative creative projects promotes teamwork, cooperation, and social interaction among children. Working together on art projects, storytelling, or dramatic play fosters communication, empathy, negotiation, and conflict-resolution skills, enhancing their ability to collaborate effectively with others.



Figure 5.1.10: "Hair Salon" by Heather Carter is licensed CC-BY-SA

Creative Meets Physical Development

Fine Motor Skills: Many creative activities, such as drawing, coloring, painting, cutting, and crafting, require precise hand-eye coordination and manipulation of small objects. These activities help children develop and refine their fine motor skills, including dexterity, grip strength, and hand control. Strengthening fine motor skills is crucial for tasks like writing, tying shoelaces, and using utensils effectively.



Figure 5.1.11: "Wood Working in Preschool" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA.

Gross Motor Skills: While some creative activities focus on fine motor skills, others involve gross motor movements such as dancing, playing musical instruments, building with blocks, or engaging in outdoor exploration and physical play. These activities promote the development of gross motor skills like balance, coordination, agility, and spatial awareness. Gross motor skills are essential for activities such as running, jumping, climbing, and participating in sports.

Sensory Exploration: Creative activities often involve sensory experiences such as touching different textures, experimenting with colors and shapes, listening to music or sounds, and exploring various materials. Sensory exploration not only stimulates cognitive development but also enhances sensory integration, proprioception, and body awareness. This sensory input contributes to overall physical development and sensory-motor coordination.

Body Movement and Expression: Creative outlets like dance, drama, and expressive arts encourage children to use their bodies as a means of expression and communication. Engaging in rhythmic movements, gestures, poses, and facial expressions not only fosters creativity but also promotes physical expression, body awareness, posture, balance, and control. Dance, in particular, supports cardiovascular health, flexibility, strength, and endurance.



Figure 5.1.12: "Singing" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-NC-ND

Creativity Anywhere, Anytime

Creativity can happen anywhere, anytime. Creativity is often a part of play in all areas of the classroom. Here are several examples:

- blocks and building structures,
- constructing with open-ended manipulatives like Zoobs, Magnatiles, Squiz, etc.
- science and experimentation, such as arranging magnetic tubes(opens in new window) to create a ramp system,
- tinkering with technology to develop "improvements", or
- using loose parts to tell a story.

Why the Creative Process is Important...

"Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding" (Edwards et.al, 1998, p.77). Creativity involves complex ways of thinking yielding diverse pathways, to sometimes similar and sometimes different results. This process can be difficult to study or measure (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016).



Figure 5.1.13: "Creativity" is licensed by Denise Krebs CC-BY 2.0

Yet, the process is the underlying foundation for much of children's and humans' development and learning. For example, even the simple task of how to kick a ball in the direction you want it to go requires one to analyze body movements and types of contact with the ball, and assess how much power is applied to the ball. As one practices, one becomes more aware of and in tune with their body, in being able to refine how they are moving in relation to the ball's resulting position, once the kick is made. Repeating the process over and over, and making small adjustments, helps one learn how to kick a ball in the direction you want it to go.

Not every process lends to an enduring product (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016), sometimes because of the nature of the project, as such, with the art of kicking a ball. Sometimes it is because the child dismantles their efforts because he/she is finished playing. Other times, it's because the product naturally evolves during the process and does not last.

> What children think and what they do as they engage in an activity -- and how their thinking develops and matures as a result -- are the most important aspects of the experience. Some creative activities, however, do result in a product. The distinction is that children select the materials, tools, and techniques to produce their own unique results. The final product is not predetermined by the teacher or copied from another's work, but is instead one of a kind... (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016, p. 21)

The Value of Open-Ended Creative Endeavors

How do open-ended art experiences offer so many opportunities for learning? Consider the difference between open-ended and closed-ended questions. Close-ended questions tend to result in one-word answers and limit children's thinking, such as "Did you have a good day?". However, open-ended questions and prompts challenge children to use creative and critical thinking skills (NAEYC, 2015). For example, "How was your day?".

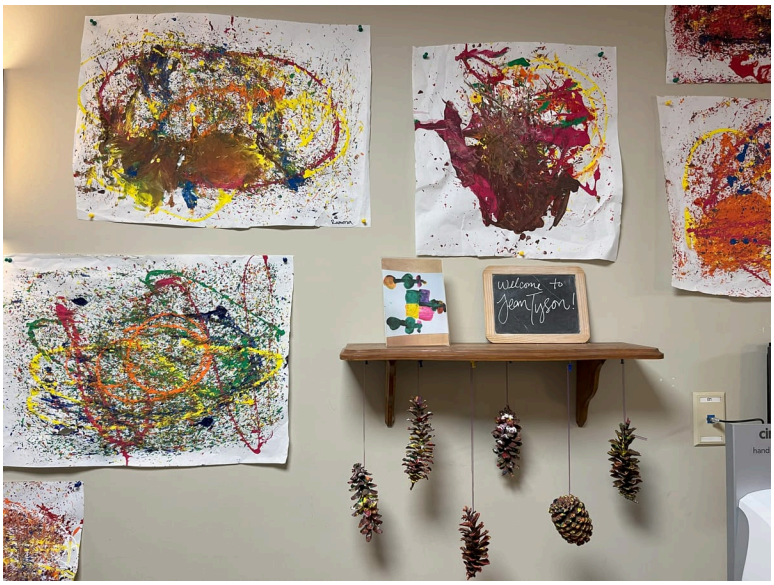


Figure 5.1.14: "Fall art and pinecones". is licensed by Heather Carter CC-BY-SA

This same concept applies to closed vs. open-ended art. Closed-ended projects, such as coloring in a coloring book or gluing pre-cut pieces to make a craft, may support fine motor skills, but open-ended art builds these skills *while* challenging children's creativity and critical thinking.

References

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[2] Image by the California Department of Education is used with permission

[3] Image by the California Department of Education is used with permission

[4] Image by Ermalfaro is licensed by CC BY-4.0

[5] Image by the California Department of Education is used with permission

[6] The California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2 by the California Department of Education is used with permission

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5.2: Creating Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Art Learning Experiences

Creating art lessons that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate is essential for fostering creativity, self-expression, and cultural awareness in young children. Just as in other subject areas, it's important to plan art activities that respect and reflect the children's backgrounds, interests, and stages of development. These lessons should offer engaging opportunities for children to explore new ideas, materials, and techniques in ways that are culturally and developmentally appropriate.

Principles for Planning Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Art Lessons

When planning art lessons for young children, it's important to consider their age, developmental stage, and cultural backgrounds. These three factors—age-appropriateness, individual-appropriateness, and social and cultural-appropriateness—are key to creating meaningful and engaging art activities.

1. Age-Appropriateness

Educators should use established theories and research on child development to inform the selection of activities, materials, and interactions. Activities must align with the developmental stages of children, providing an optimal balance of challenge and support.

2. Individual-Appropriateness

Art lessons should be tailored to meet each child's unique needs, interests, and strengths. This involves customizing activities to ensure meaningful engagement for all children, accommodating those who are more advanced as well as those who are still developing foundational skills.

3. Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness

Incorporating an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the children into lesson planning is crucial. This includes using materials, symbols, and traditions that resonate with the children's family experiences. Additionally, educators must consider linguistic diversity and design art activities that promote inclusion for all children, regardless of their linguistic background.

Planning Developmentally Appropriate Art Lessons

Creating a developmentally appropriate art lesson means selecting materials and activities that are suited to the developmental stage of the children in your care. Below, we will examine how to plan art activities for different age groups, ensuring engaging, developmentally appropriate, and reflective of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Infant Art Experience: Sensory Exploration Through Color and Texture

In the infant stage, art experiences focus primarily on sensory exploration. The goal is to engage the infant's senses of touch, sight, and movement while introducing basic concepts such as color and texture. At this age, children explore their environment through hands-on, sensory-rich experiences.

Example Activity: Blowing colorful, non-toxic bubbles towards infants, allowing them to track and pop them. This introduces them to color recognition while promoting visual and sensory exploration.

Infant Art Experience: Exploring Color with Sensory Bubbles



Age Group

Infants (0-12 months)

Setting

Cozy infant room in a multicultural early childhood setting. Infants aged 0-12 months from diverse cultural backgrounds (English, Spanish, Somali).

Materials Needed

Non-toxic bubble solution, bubble wands, soft play mat.

Duration

10-15 minutes

Context

Sensory-rich environment for exploring basic colors and textures through a bubble activity. Focus on sensory exploration, visual tracking, and early language development.

Activity

Ms. Rose gathers the infants on a soft play mat and gently blows colorful, non-toxic bubbles towards them. She names the colors in English, Somali, and Spanish to expose the infants to different languages.

Teacher's Dialogue

- Ms. Rose (to Liam, in English): "Red bubbles! Look at the red bubbles flying around!"
- Ms. Rose (to Zara, in Somali): "Buluug! Look, blue bubbles are flying through the air!"
- Ms. Rose (to Mateo, in Spanish): "Amarillo! Yellow bubbles, look how they float!"

Hands-on Exploration

Infants are encouraged to reach for and touch the bubbles. Ms. Rose helps guide their hands if needed, bringing the bubbles closer to younger infants who cannot yet reach them.

Teacher's Dialogue (Continued)

- Ms. Rose (to all): "Can you touch the bubble? Try to catch it with your hands! Look, you popped the bubble!"

She keeps the activity slow-paced, allowing the infants to explore at their own pace.

Cultural & Linguistic Integration

The teacher speaks the color names in English, Somali, and Spanish to expose the infants to multiple languages, fostering early language development and cultural awareness.

Reflection and Sharing

After the activity, Ms. Rose gathers the infants and reflects: "Look at all the beautiful bubbles! Did you see the colors? Red, blue, yellow. Let's see if we can make more bubbles next time!"
She encourages caregivers to use the same color names at home.

Developmental Goals

1. **Visual Tracking and Focus**: Infants will enhance their ability to visually track objects in their environment.
2. **Sensory Exploration**: Infants will explore different textures and colors through sight and touch.
3. **Language Development**: Infants will begin to hear the names of colors in English and their home languages, laying the foundation for future language development.
4. **Cultural Awareness**: Through multiple languages, Ms. Rose promotes respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

Toddler Art Experience: Exploring Colors with Finger Painting

Toddlers benefit from hands-on experiences that allow them to explore the world around them. Art activities for toddlers should focus on promoting creativity through basic materials like crayons, paints, and fabric, encouraging fine motor skills and sensory exploration.

Example Activity: Finger painting with primary colors. Toddlers will experiment with color mixing and texture while learning to identify and name colors in their native language and English.

Toddler Art Experience Plan: Colorful Finger Painting Fun



Context

Sensory-based art activity for toddlers to explore colors using finger paints. The goal is to enhance fine motor skills, introduce basic colors, and celebrate cultural diversity.

Activity

Ms. Sanchez gathers toddlers around a low table with paper and paints. She introduces the activity and the colors they will use, incorporating language in both English and their home languages.

Teacher's Dialogue

- Ms. Sanchez (to the group): "Today, we're going to make colorful prints with our fingers! We'll get to touch the paint and see what happens when we mix colors!"
- Ms. Sanchez (to Liam, in English): "What color is that?"
- Liam (in English): "Red!"
- Ms. Sanchez (to Zara, in Somali): "What color is that?"
- Zara (in Somali): "Buluug!" (Blue in Somali)
- Ms. Sanchez (to Mateo, in Spanish): "What color is that?"
- Mateo (in Spanish): "Amarillo!" (Yellow in Spanish)
- Ms. Sanchez (to Amira, in Arabic): "What color is that?"
- Amira (in Arabic): "Ahmar!" (Red in Arabic)

Hands-on Exploration

Ms. Sanchez demonstrates dipping her finger into the paint and making prints. Toddlers are encouraged to explore by using their fingers to make marks, press, and squish the paint.

Teacher's Dialogue (Continued)

- Ms. Sanchez to Zara: "I see you're using blue, just like Liam! What else can we do with blue?"
- Zara (in Somali): "I'll make a blue circle!"
- Ms. Sanchez: "Great job, Zara! That looks beautiful!"

Cultural & Linguistic Integration

Ms. Sanchez encourages toddlers to connect colors with familiar objects at home.

- Ms. Sanchez to Amira: "What things at home are purple?"
- Amira (in Arabic): "My mom's dress is purple."
- Ms. Sanchez: "How beautiful! We can add purple to our picture next time!"

Reflection and Sharing

After the activity, Ms. Sanchez gathers the toddlers to reflect on their artwork.

- Ms. Sanchez: "Look at all the colorful pictures you made! Can you show us what colors you used today?"
- Liam (in English): "Red and yellow!"
- Zara (in Somali): "Buluug iyo casaan!" (Blue and red)
- Mateo (in Spanish): "Amarillo y verde!" (Yellow and green)
- Amira (in Arabic): "Ahmar!" (Red)

Teacher's Dialogue (Continued)

- Ms. Sanchez: "Zara, you used blue and red—those are wonderful colors! What things at home are blue or red?"

Developmental Goals

1. **Fine Motor Skills**: Toddlers practice finger movements that strengthen hand-eye coordination.
2. **Color Recognition**: Toddlers identify and name colors in both their home language and English.
3. **Sensory Exploration**: The finger painting activity provides a tactile experience for sensory development.

4. **Cultural Awareness**: Connecting colors with objects at home helps toddlers celebrate cultural diversity.

Preschool Art Experience: Exploring Color and Creativity

Preschoolers have developed the ability to focus on activities for longer periods, which provides the opportunity to engage in more complex art activities. At this stage, children are ready to explore color theory, texture, and simple artistic techniques.

Example Activity: Drawing with crayons, markers, and fabric swatches in various colors. Children can explore self-expression while also being encouraged to identify colors and make connections to objects in their environment, including those from their cultural backgrounds.

Preschool Art Experience: Colorful Self-Expression Through Art



Age Group

Preschoolers

Setting

Preschool classroom in a multicultural setting. Children aged 3-5 years from diverse cultural backgrounds (English, Spanish, Somali, Arabic).

Materials Needed

Crayons, colored markers, construction paper, and fabric swatches in bright colors.

Duration

20-30 minutes

Context

Sensory-rich art activity designed to introduce preschoolers to the concept of color, foster creativity, and engage them in a developmentally appropriate way. The activity aligns with DAP, Head Start ELOF, and WMELS, supporting social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.

Activity

Ms. Lee gathers the preschoolers around the art table with various coloring materials. She introduces the activity, encourages them to explore colors, and connects the colors to familiar objects or concepts.

Teacher's Dialogue

- Ms. Lee (to the group): "Today, we're going to make colorful pictures! We're going to explore all the different colors we can see. Can you show me your favorite color?"
- Ms. Lee (to Liam, in English): "What's your favorite color?"
- Liam (in English): "Blue!"
- Ms. Lee (to Zara, in Somali): "What's your favorite color?"
- Zara (in Somali): "Buluug!" (Blue in Somali)
- Ms. Lee (to Mateo, in Spanish): "What's your favorite color?"
- Mateo (in Spanish): "Rojo!" (Red in Spanish)
- Ms. Lee (to Amira, in Arabic): "What's your favorite color?"
- Amira (in Arabic): "Ahmar!" (Red in Arabic)

Hands-On Exploration

Ms. Lee demonstrates how to color using crayons and markers, showing how to press gently to make marks. She encourages the children to start coloring with their favorite colors.

Teacher's Dialogue (Continued)

- Ms. Lee (to Zara): "I see you're using red, just like Mateo! What else can we color with red?"
- Zara (in Somali): "I will color the apple red!"
- Ms. Lee: "Great idea! Red apples are so nice and bright!"

Cultural & Linguistic Integration

Ms. Lee encourages children to share what things in their culture or at home are the same colors they're using.

- Ms. Lee (to Amira): "Amira, what is your favorite color? What things at home are that color?"
- Amira (in Arabic): "I like purple. My mom wears a purple dress!"
- Ms. Lee: "How beautiful! Purple dresses are so lovely. We can add purple to our picture, too!"

Reflection and Sharing

After the activity, Ms. Lee gathers the preschoolers to reflect on their artwork and share their colors.

- Ms. Lee (to the group): "Look at all the beautiful colors you used today! Can you tell us what colors you used?"
- Liam (in English): "Blue and yellow!"
- Zara (in Somali): "Buluug iyo casaan!" (Blue and red)
- Mateo (in Spanish): "Rojo y verde!" (Red and green)
- Amira (in Arabic): "Ahmar!" (Red)

Teacher's Dialogue (Continued)

- Ms. Lee: "Zara, you said 'buluug iyo casaan' (blue and red) — those are beautiful colors! What's something in your house that's blue or red?"

Developmental Goals

1. **Fine Motor Skills**: Preschoolers practice hand-eye coordination through coloring.
2. **Color Recognition**: Preschoolers learn and reinforce color names in both their home language and English.
3. **Creative Expression**: Preschoolers express their creativity through color exploration.
4. **Cultural Awareness**: By connecting colors with objects in their culture and home, preschoolers develop an understanding and appreciation for diversity.

Integrating Cultural and Linguistic Awareness into Art Activities

As with other areas of development, it is important to ensure that art activities are culturally and linguistically appropriate. This involves integrating the children's cultural backgrounds into their art experiences. For example, a painting activity might involve using materials or themes that are familiar to the children, such as incorporating cultural symbols or traditions into their artwork.

Example: In a multicultural classroom, children might be encouraged to create art representing their family or cultural traditions, which helps them connect their learning to their home life and community.

Using Materials That Reflect Diversity

The materials used in art activities should be diverse and reflective of the children's cultures. For example, offering dolls and play figures that represent different ethnicities, family structures, and community roles can help children learn to value diversity while also reflecting their own experiences.

Creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate art experiences for young children is essential for fostering creativity, self-expression, and respect for diversity. By integrating cultural backgrounds, developmental stages, and language exposure into art activities, educators can provide meaningful and engaging experiences that support the holistic development of children. Whether working with infants, toddlers, or preschoolers, the use of culturally relevant materials and activities not only enhances children's learning but also encourages a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own and others' cultures. Through these art experiences, children are provided with opportunities to explore, create, and communicate in ways that are both developmentally appropriate and culturally enriching.

Creativity and Developmentally Appropriate, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Experiences and Environments

Creativity in early childhood education is multifaceted, encompassing specific art activities and broader strategies for fostering creative development. By integrating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate art experiences with general creativity support strategies, educators can create a comprehensive and inclusive learning environment that nurtures every aspect of a child's creative potential.

Connecting Art Activities to Creativity Support

Art activities are a powerful tool for fostering creativity in young children. These activities not only provide opportunities for self-expression and exploration but also help children develop essential skills such as fine motor coordination, color recognition, and cultural awareness. When combined with responsive teacher-child interactions and thoughtfully designed environments, art activities can significantly enhance children's creative development.

Enhancing Art Activities with Responsive Interactions. Responsive interactions, such as taking cues from the child and asking open-ended questions, can deepen the impact of art activities. For example, during a finger painting session, a teacher might ask, "What else can we do with blue paint?" This encourages children to think creatively and explore new possibilities. Positive reinforcement, such as praising a child's effort in mixing colors, further supports their creative exploration.

Creating Stimulating Environments for Art Activities. The physical environment plays a crucial role in supporting art activities. Sensory-rich areas with diverse materials, such as light tables and mirrors, provide a stimulating backdrop for creative exploration. Spaces designed for both individual and group activities, such as cozy corners and interactive learning centers, offer children the flexibility to engage in solitary or collaborative art projects.

Integrating Cultural and Linguistic Awareness

Incorporating cultural and linguistic awareness into both art activities and general creativity support strategies ensures that all children feel included and valued. Using materials and symbols that resonate with children's family experiences and designing activities that promote linguistic diversity fosters a sense of belonging and respect for diversity.

Example Integration: Multicultural Art Projects A multicultural art project, such as creating artwork representing family traditions, can be enhanced by responsive interactions and a stimulating environment. Teachers can encourage children to share

stories about their artwork, ask open-ended questions about their cultural symbols, and provide positive reinforcement for their creative efforts. The environment can be enriched with materials that reflect the children's cultures, such as fabric swatches and dolls representing different ethnicities.

By bridging developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate art experiences with broader strategies for supporting creativity, educators can create a holistic and inclusive learning environment. This integrated approach not only enhances children's creative development but also fosters self-expression, problem-solving skills, and cultural awareness. The following sections will delve deeper into specific strategies for supporting creativity through teacher-child interactions and the physical environment.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of teacher-child interactions in fostering creativity, emphasizing how responsive, open-ended conversations and questions stimulate children's imagination and problem-solving skills.
- Identify strategies for early childhood educators to support creativity through interactions, such as providing positive feedback, offering challenges, and encouraging children to express their ideas in various forms.
- Describe how the physical environment can influence and support creativity in young children by providing stimulating, flexible spaces that encourage exploration and expression.
- Identify key elements of an environment that foster creativity, such as access to diverse materials, open-ended play spaces, and opportunities for collaboration and individual expression.

Supporting Creativity Through Interactions

Daily interactions provide the foundation for creativity in young children. Children who have developed relationships with warm, caring adults will be more likely to feel safe in exploring new situations and environments. The way adults interact with young children can either encourage or stifle their creative exploration. Supporting creativity in daily interactions involves being responsive, providing opportunities for exploration, and encouraging curiosity.

Responsive Interactions

Responsive interactions are key to nurturing creativity.

1. **Take cues from the child**. When adults respond to a child's cues, they validate the child's feelings and ideas, which fosters confidence and encourages further exploration. For example, if a toddler points to a bird outside, the professional might respond by talking about the bird, mimicking its sounds, or even encouraging the child to draw or imitate the bird. These interactions help children feel that their ideas are valued and worth exploring.
2. **Open-ended questions.** Simple activities such as asking open-ended questions, encouraging imaginative play, and providing positive reinforcement can significantly impact a child's creative development. For instance, instead of asking, "What color is the sky?" you might ask, "What else could the sky look like today?" This type of questioning encourages children to think beyond the obvious and explore possibilities.
3. **Positive reinforcement and praise.** Positive reinforcement, such as praising a child's *effort rather than the outcome*, fosters a growth mindset that is crucial for creative thinking (Dweck, 2006). For example, saying, "I love how you mixed those colors together," rather than "Your painting is beautiful," emphasizes the process of creation rather than the final product, encouraging further exploration and experimentation.

Encouraging Exploration

Providing opportunities for exploration is another way to support creativity. This can be as simple as allowing young children to explore different textures, sounds, and materials. For example, a caregiver might provide a variety of safe household items, such as wooden spoons, fabric, and empty containers, for infants and toddlers to explore (Council for Professional Recognition, 2023). This not only supports sensory development but also encourages the child to think creatively about how to use these objects in different ways.

In the photo below, an exploration area has been set up with various sensory bottles, scarf pull, touch lights (batteries are behind a screwed-in compartment), and a board with many flooring samples to touch and/or sit/walk/crawl on in an infant classroom. (The photo was taken during a conference on a Saturday morning, which is why a coffee cup is sitting on top of the shelf. No children were present.) The exploration area is set up in a safe, open place for infants to move freely and have uninterrupted time to explore. Depending on the age and developmental needs of the child(ren), these spaces will look very different.



Figure 5.2.1: "Infant Discovery Learning Area" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA.

In essence, the early childhood environment is more than just a physical space—it is a dynamic ecosystem that shapes and nurtures young minds. While a professional's vision and design of the environment affect children's responses and prompt engagement, it is the child's use of the environment that determines how learning and development occur in meaningful ways.

The early childhood environment serves as a canvas for fostering creativity. Children are naturally curious and imaginative beings, and their surroundings significantly influence the expression of these qualities. A well-designed environment encourages exploration, experimentation, and problem-solving, all of which are fundamental aspects of creative development. From open-ended materials to inviting spaces that stimulate the senses, every element of the environment contributes to sparking and nurturing children's creativity.



Figure 5.2.2: "Toddlers Exploring Sounds" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA

Moreover, the early childhood environment is a powerful catalyst for learning. Young children learn best through hands-on experiences and meaningful interactions with their surroundings. An environment that is rich in age-appropriate, open-ended materials provides ample opportunities for children to engage actively in the learning process. By immersing themselves in a stimulating environment, children can absorb new concepts, develop essential skills, and make meaningful connections that lay the groundwork for future academic success.

Finally, the early childhood environment plays a crucial role in facilitating self-expression. For young children, finding ways to communicate thoughts, feelings, and experiences is essential for social and emotional development. An environment that values and supports self-expression empowers children to express themselves authentically through various media, such as art, music, movement, and dramatic play. By providing avenues for self-expression, the early childhood environment fosters confidence, self-awareness, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for overall well-being and positive social interactions.

Planning Effective Environments

While environments were explored more in-depth earlier in the text, there are a few general considerations that align well with understanding how to support children's creativity and the process of learning. Think of spaces that make you feel calm, focused, and welcomed. What do they look like? What elements do they include? Now, consider the diverse people, families, and communities that comprise an early childhood program. How do we blend the two together?

By reflecting the diversity within the culture, language, and geographical features within the local community, and children's interests with more commonly identified elements such as lighting, colors, textures, organization, and presentation of spaces, we can create an environment that communicates a sense of belonging.

Warm and Welcoming

Natural lighting is important to learning and behavior because it helps regulate our mood (Boubekri et.al, 2014), and has been proposed as the single most important element in the learning environment (Fielding, 2017). However, using natural light isn't always conducive to spaces that were retrofitted or not designed with light in mind. Using sturdy table and floor lamps can help accentuate specific areas of the room or materials, in addition to supplementing natural light (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016).



Figure 5.2.3: "Light Table and Props" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA. A light table is propped up vertically to illuminate objects in front of it. Black fabric is utilized behind and below the light table to help direct light.

Color, texture, and sound also play a role in establishing a sense of calm and warmth in the environment. Bright primary colors were once thought to engage children's senses for the promotion of activity and learning, eventually becoming a standard across many early childhood programs. However, partly influenced by the Reggio Emilia school environment, and partly influenced by research on how color affects our productivity, mood, and creativity, early childhood programs are now moving towards more neutral and earth tones so that the environment serves as more of a backdrop to creativity and learning.

Natural elements add texture and visual appeal. Rugs, nontoxic plants, pillows with washable covers, draped fabrics, and other materials can help define spaces when used in thoughtful ways. Sounds can also support or distract children's creativity. Arrangements of the spaces within the environment -- in keeping noisy spaces away from quieter ones -- and how music is used throughout the day are important to consider when designing a space that is warm and inviting.



Figure 5.2.4: "Infant Exploration of Colors, Mirrors, and Boxes" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA

Provide a Sense of Belonging

Most early childhood programs include children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles, abilities, languages, religions, and family structures. When these differences are reflected within the environment, it communicates a sense of belonging and expands the possibilities for creative work shaped by the characteristics and needs of the individual children (Isbell & Yoshiwaza, 2016).

Some ways to reflect this diversity are through:

- Display photos that represent the children, learning within the program, families, and/or places within the local community
- Display children's art, work, or familial artifacts
- Provide a variety of books, materials, and activities that are relevant to the current diversity within the group
- Bring in customs or traditions celebrated by children/families within the classroom

Consider Children's Work and Learning

In the realm of early childhood education, the environment plays a pivotal role in shaping young minds and fostering holistic development. Whether in large groups, small groups, pairs, or working individually, the design and arrangement of the learning environment significantly impact children's creativity and learning potential. One general consideration is the understanding that children need to do and use too much before they can learn how to use just enough. This extends from using a lot of paper to glue, paint, etc. Always make sure you have plenty of supplies on hand. If resources and budget are an issue, try using manila and butcher paper instead of construction paper, recyclables, and diluting glue or watercolor with a little bit of water.



Figure 5.2.5: "Glue in Paint Pots" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA. Dilute glue with about 25% water in glue pots with paint brushes for a more cost-effective option for using glue in early childhood programs.

Large Groups

In large group settings, such as classrooms or communal spaces, the environment should be structured to accommodate diverse activities while encouraging social interaction and collaboration. Interactive learning centers and ample space for movement allow children to engage with peers, share ideas, and participate in group activities. To spark curiosity and promote active participation, consider incorporating:

- stimulating visuals,
- age-appropriate materials, and
- multisensory experiences.



Figure 5.2.6: "Older Toddler Classroom Reading Area" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA. The reading area in an older toddler classroom provides ample space for large groups that includes different surfaces and soft elements for sitting, lying, and relaxing while reading.

Small Groups

Conversely, in small group settings of two to six children, the environment can be tailored to facilitate focused exploration and

meaningful interactions. Creating inviting spaces for small group discussion, cooperative projects, and guided activities could include:

- Cozy corners
- Rotated interest centers
- Cross-area play in learning centers. **Cross-area play** is unscripted play that provides children the freedom to utilize materials from all areas of the classroom (Minahan et.al, 2021).

By providing opportunities for children to work closely with peers, share perspectives, and problem-solve collaboratively, the environment cultivates creativity through a shared process.



Figure 5.2.7: "Cross-Play in Preschool" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA. A small group of four older preschoolers is having a picnic in the block area. These children chose the block area so that a road could be built to get to the picnic site. Cross-play with props from the home living area was encouraged by the teachers so that the group would fully commit to the shared vision.

Partner and Individual Work

Similarly, in partner and individual learning settings, the environment should be conducive to independent exploration, self-directed inquiry, and personalized learning experiences. Some of the ways to incorporate might include:

- quiet or alone areas (sometimes called safe spaces),
- designated workstations, such as a listening area,
- and comfortable seating arrangements that consider the type of work being offered as a rotated daily activity.



Figure 5.2.8: "Caused and Effect" by Heather Carter is licensed CC BY-SA. Exploring primary color tinted vinegar with baking soda on mirrors is set up as a rotated daily activity for children to explore individually or in pairs.

Providing children the autonomy to pursue their interests, engage in reflective practices, and pursue projects at their own pace empowers children to take ownership of their learning and express themselves creatively. By thoughtfully designing spaces that inspire curiosity, encourage exploration, and support diverse learning styles, professionals can create environments where every child thrives and discovers their full potential.

Supporting the Visual Arts

Preschool children often have a natural fascination with the process of creating visual art. Making marks, squishing clay, and using a brush to apply color are activities that attract most young children. In groups where children speak multiple languages and may not share common words, visual art can create connections and a way of communicating. Art can become a way for people to connect across cultures to their common humanity; an appreciation for it may begin in preschool. Inviting families into the environment to share works of art from the home is an opportunity to build a bridge to the home.

Young children are naturally creative. The visual art framework is designed to encourage creativity; open-ended projects emphasize the process of working with visual materials. In other words, the curriculum is not focused on encouraging a child to produce, for example, a specific painting, but rather to practice using a brush on paper without a set outcome.



Figure 5.2.9: This child painting at the easel.[1]

Children are both consumers and creators of visual arts, which is reflected in the foundations:

Visual Art

1.0 Notice, Respond, and Engage

Notice, Respond, and Engage Visual Art Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Notice and communicate about objects or forms that appear in art.	1.1 Communicate about elements appearing in art (such as line, texture, or perspective), and describe how objects are positioned in the artwork.
1.2 Create marks with crayons, paints, and chalk, and then identify them; mold and build with dough and clay, and then identify them.	1.2 Begin to plan art and show increasing care and persistence in completing it.
1.3 Enjoy and engage with displays of visual art, inside or outside the classroom. Begin to express preferences for some art activities or materials.	1.3 Enjoy and engage with displays of visual art. May expand critical assessment of visual art to include preferences for types of artwork or art activities.
1.4 Chooses own art for display in the classroom or for inclusion in a portfolio or book, and briefly explains their choice.	1.4 Choose own art for display in the classroom or for inclusion in a portfolio or book and explain her or his ideas in some detail.

2.0 Develop Skills in Visual Art

Develop Skills in Visual Art Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Make straight and curved marks and lines; begin to draw rough circle shapes.	2.1 Draw a single circle and add lines to create representations of people and things.
2.2 Begin to create paintings or drawings that suggest people, animals, and objects.	2.2 Begin to create representative paintings or drawings that approximate or depict people, animals, and objects.

Developmental Sequence of Drawing

When provided with tools and a supportive environment, children from ages three to five progress more rapidly in the visual arts than during any other two-year period before adulthood. Creativity and imagination are at their apex at age four-and-a-half years; most experienced preschool teachers will attest to this. The arts are a natural outlet for the creative thinking of a preschooler, and learning is rapid.

The progression of children's drawing ability is the most documented in the visual arts. When children are given a means and a place to make marks, they begin with a series of vertical lines and move on to mandalas (i.e., repeated circles). The mandalas soon sprout legs and arms, then faces, and more detailed features such as hair, fingers, or eyes. Harvard University Professor Howard Gardner refers to this process as "the birth of the potato person." This research has become so well-known that medical doctors will now check on children's intellectual progress by asking the child and parent how detailed the child's human-figure drawings are (rather than asking about letters and numbers) at the four-year and five-year checkups. Because children speak multiple languages and progress differently in writing skills, the question about drawing is more relevant and telling for this age group.

Developmental Sequence of Drawing



Figure 5.2.10: Early, nonrepresentational mark-making



Figure 5.2.11: A mandala becomes an early representational drawing of a sun.



Figure 5.2.12:The emergence of the "potato person": a first effort at representing a person

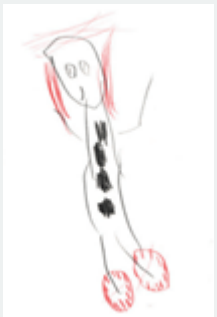


Figure 5.2.13: A more advanced drawing: person wearing "sparkly shoes"

The painting progress of children is not as well-documented as their drawing progress. In general, children begin by simply experimenting with brushstrokes and the process of applying paint to a surface. Children's first paintings are usually solid sections of a single color, two colors, or three colors at the most. The brushstrokes begin to change directions, and shapes emerge. Finally, children begin to attempt representational paintings. The subject matter of such paintings varies depending on the child, the teacher, and the environment.[2]

Teachers can support children's development of the visual arts foundations with the following:

- Encourage engagement with art at all levels.
- Support exploration and discovery.
- Give children the time and space needed to explore creativity.
- Provide a comfortable environment in which children can practice art.
- Provide opportunities for children to reflect on their work.
- Respect individual developmental, cultural, and linguistic differences, and encourage children to respect them.
- Provide children simply with a means and place to make marks (e.g., a crayon and paper), and they will begin with the same basic images.
- Encourage communication around shape and form to aid children's drawing skills.
- Help children acquire painting skills through practice with the tools.
- Stimulate children's interest in color and the application of paint through other forms of painting.
- Create opportunities for children to work with dough, clay, or wet sand.
- Provide only the malleable material, without tools, during children's initial explorations of sculpting so that children have a chance to explore through touch.
- Communicate to a group of linguistically and culturally diverse children through sculpture techniques by using nonverbal methods.

- Introduce tools after observing that children have had many “hands-on” opportunities to explore clay and dough sculpture.[3]



Figure 5.2.14: Working with clay is a different experience from working with play-dough.[4]

Table 5.2.1: Suggested Materials for Visual Art[5]

Type of Materials	Examples of Materials
Found or Recycled Materials	Old magazines for cutting and assemblage, toilet paper, and paper towel rolls
Basic	Tempera paints, construction paper, chunky crayons, watercolor trays
Enhanced	Tube watercolors and palette; watercolor paper
Natural Environment	Sticks, rocks, and pinecones for sculpture; clay and natural materials for pressing
Adaptive Materials	Thicker handles on some materials; an easel that can be adjusted to an appropriate height

Vignettes

Ms. Cheng is showing children how colors can be mixed to create other colors. While pouring some yellow paint on the plate, she says, “What is this color?” “Yellow!” shout the children. Knowing that some children speak other home languages, Ms. Lin asks, “Milagros, how do you say yellow in Spanish?” “Amarillo,” Milagros answers. “Samantha, how do you say yellow in Mandarin?” “Huang!” Samantha answers. Ms. Cheng pours out some blue paint and asks the same set of questions. As she moves on to mix the two colors, they turn green. This time, without prompting, some children shout, “Green!” others say, “Verde!” and others say, “Lu!”

> It is springtime. The children have returned from a walk outdoors with handfuls of yellow flowers. The teacher places the flowers in a cup in the middle of the painting area and asks the children what the color of the flowers are. Then he asks, “What shapes do you see in the flower?” The children say, “Circles!” “Lines!” “Squares!” The teacher says, “Really? Where?” The children point at different parts of the flower. The teacher brings out brushes and paint and asks the children if they would like to paint the flowers.
>
> Many of the children sit down and begin to work with the materials, producing all kinds of images. When a child has too much paint on the brush, the teacher assists in showing the child how to wipe paint from the brush on the side of the paint container. As the children finish, the teacher encourages them to talk about their paintings and then places them in the drying area. Some children finish quickly, and others become absorbed and work for a very long time. Some want to try several times on a new paper. A few children attempt to represent the flowers in their paintings, and others experiment with the movement of the brushes and the mixing of colors on the paper.[6]

References

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5.3: Effective Transitions for Art Experiences

In Chapter 1, we discussed the importance of transitions in early childhood education, particularly how they contribute to a structured and engaging learning environment. In Chapter 4, we explored social studies transitions, focusing on how to help children move smoothly from one activity to another while maintaining their attention and promoting learning. Now, let's apply these concepts to planning art transitions that are effective and developmentally appropriate.

Why Transitions Matter in Art Activities

Transitions between activities are an essential part of early childhood education. They ensure that children move smoothly from one activity to another, reducing disruptions and fostering a structured, engaging learning environment. For art activities, effective transitions are especially important because they help maintain the children's focus, manage their excitement, and ensure they are mentally prepared for the upcoming task. Below, review what makes effective transitions and what the teacher should do before, during, and after the transition.

Effective Transitions



Figure 5.3.1: Effective transitions

Promote smooth daily flow, ensuring there are minimal disruptions as children transition between activities.

Gain children's attention or interest, setting them up for the art activity ahead.

Provide clear directions about what is coming next, helping children understand the purpose of the activity.

Create order in the classroom, ensuring transitions are efficient and calm.

Reinforce learning, helping children process what they've learned during the activity.

Transition Strategies Before, During, and After Art Activities

Before the Transition

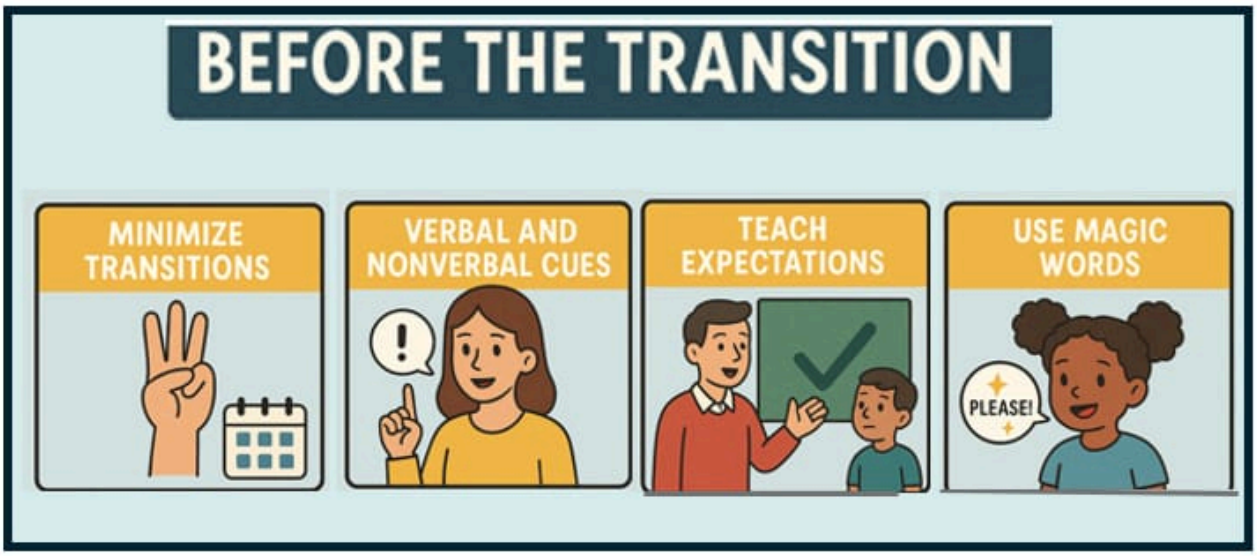


Figure 5.3.2: Before the Transition tips

Minimize Transitions: Plan your daily schedule to reduce the number of transitions, especially ones where all children have to do the same thing at once. For art activities, consider letting some children engage with materials while others finish up tasks.

Verbal and Nonverbal Cues: Provide visual cues (like showing a picture of a paintbrush or palette) and verbal warnings (“Five more minutes till we start painting”) to prepare children for the upcoming activity.

Teach Expectations: Establish clear expectations for cleanup or moving from one area to another. Teaching children how to clean up and prepare for transitions helps reduce the time spent waiting.

Use Magic Words: Introduce “magic words” to signal the start of the activity. For example, "When I say ‘Create,’ it’s time to start our artwork!"

During the Transition



Figure 5.3.3: During the Transition tips

Engage in Transition Activities: Use songs, finger plays, or simple games to keep children engaged while transitioning to art. This could be:

- A movement-based transition: "Let's pretend to paint a big mural on the wall!"
- A song related to the theme: "Let's sing 'The Art in Our Town' before we start painting."

Give Warnings: Remind children that the activity will soon be over to help them finish without frustration. For example, "It's almost time to clean up! Finish up your drawings in the next few minutes."

Individualize Support: Tailor transition strategies to individual children's needs, such as giving some children more time to transition.

After the Transition



Figure 5.3.4: After the Transition tips

Provide Positive Feedback: Acknowledge and praise children for successful transitions, such as when they clean up without

being asked. For example, “Wow! Look at how quickly you all cleaned up. Now we’re ready to move on to our next activity!”

Promote Independence: Encourage children to take ownership of their transition. For example, "As soon as you finish your painting, you can go choose a book to look at while the others finish up."

Age-Appropriate Art Transitions

Preschoolers

Songs or Rhymes

Songs can engage children and build excitement for the art activity.

Example: "Let's sing 'The Artists in Our Town' before we start our painting session!"



Pictures and Visual Cues

Example: Show a picture of a paintbrush and a palette, and prompt the children to guess what they'll be doing. You might say, "Look at this! We are going to paint, just like artists in a studio!"



Movement-Based Transition

Movement-based transitions engage children physically and prepare them for the upcoming activity.

Example: "Let's pretend we are painting a big mural on the wall, moving our hands in big, sweeping motions!"



Magic Words

"Magic" words can be used as a cue that builds anticipation and excitement.

Example: "When I say 'Create,' it means it's time to start our artwork! Ready? Create!"



Toddlers

Simple Question and Answer

Use questions to invite toddlers to engage with the concept of art before starting the activity.

Example: "What color do you want to use for your picture today?"



Animal Movement

Tying physical engagement to the art activity helps children transition smoothly.

Example: "Let's hop like bunnies as we get ready to paint!"



Movement Song

Fun songs can help toddlers transition while moving in ways that prepare them for sitting down and focusing on the task.

Example: "Clap, clap, clap your hands, Stomp, stomp, stomp your feet, Let's get ready to paint, Now let's take a seat!"



Infants

Gentle Interaction

Soft, calm interactions help infants connect to the theme of the art activity.

Example: "Let's explore these soft, colorful materials before we start our art!"



Object Exploration

Use tactile experiences to engage their senses and connect to the upcoming activity.

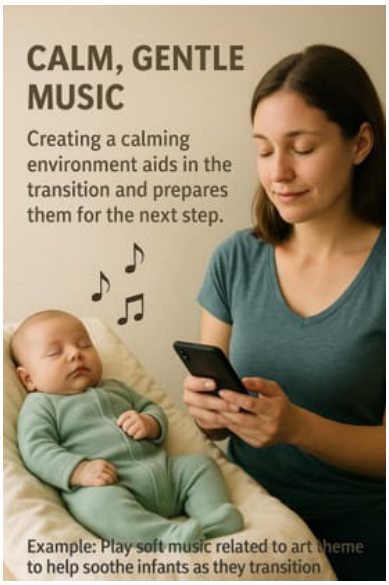
Example: Give infants a soft brush or colorful fabric to explore before they transition to an art activity.



Calm, Gentle Music

Creating a calming environment aids in the transition and prepares them for the next step.

Example: Play soft music related to the art theme to help soothe infants as they transition.



Conclusion

Effective transitions in art activities not only make the classroom flow more smoothly but also help children engage with the theme of the activity, whether it's through songs, movement, or visual cues. These transition ideas, tailored to the developmental needs of preschoolers, toddlers, and infants, ensure that children are both prepared and excited for the art experience ahead.

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5.4: Incorporating the WMELS Framework into Art Learning Experiences

In Chapter 4, we explored how to incorporate the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) framework into designing developmentally appropriate social studies lesson plans. We focused on creating lessons that were engaging, relevant, and culturally responsive, while addressing the key developmental domains such as physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and approaches to learning. By using the WMELS framework, we ensured that the social studies plans were meaningful and appropriately challenging for young children.

Incorporating WMELS into Art Learning Experience Plans

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) provide guidelines to support early childhood educators in promoting the development and learning of young children through art experiences. These standards, grounded in research, ensure developmentally appropriate, high-quality learning for children across various domains. Below is a brief review of each of the components.

Developmental Domains

- **Physical Development**: Supports motor skills, physical health, and overall well-being.
- **Social and Emotional Development**: Promotes self-regulation, relationship-building, and emotional understanding.
- **Language Development**: Encourages language skills, including listening, speaking, and early literacy.
- **Cognitive Development**: Enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and knowledge acquisition.
- **Approaches to Learning**: Encourages curiosity, persistence, and engagement in learning.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP): Ensures that activities are tailored to children's developmental stages, backgrounds, and cultural contexts.

Intentional Teaching: Educators use observation and assessment to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each child.

Family and Community Engagement: The framework emphasizes involving families in the educational process, fostering strong partnerships, and respecting cultural diversity.

Learning Outcomes: WMELS outlines expectations for young children's development and learning at various stages, ensuring a holistic approach.

Steps to Incorporate the WMELS Framework into Art Learning Experience Plans

1. **Understand the WMELS Domains**: Familiarize yourself with the five developmental domains and identify relevant standards within each domain that align with your art learning objectives.



Figure 5.4.1: WMELS Framework

- **Physical Development**: Through the manipulation of painting and other art tools, children enhance their fine motor skills.
- **Social and Emotional Development**: Art activities foster self-expression, helping children recognize their own feelings and communicate them through creative work.
- **Language Development**: Children will build their vocabulary related to colors, shapes, and artistic tools as they describe their artwork and engage in discussion.
- **Approaches to Learning**: Through exploration and experimentation, children will develop persistence, curiosity, and creativity, which are foundational skills for lifelong learning.
- **Cognition and General Knowledge**: Art activities encourage children to use problem-solving strategies, such as how to create certain shapes, mix colors, and organize their artwork.

After reviewing the developmental domains, the next step is to understand how to incorporate these domains into art learning experience plans. This involves setting clear objectives, designing engaging activities, integrating key domains, providing ongoing assessment, and involving family and community.

2. **Set Clear Art Objectives**: Align your art learning objectives with specific WMELS outcomes. For example:

    - **Language Development**: Expand vocabulary through discussions about colors, shapes, and techniques used in art.
    - **Physical Development**: Encourage fine motor skills by having children cut, glue, and arrange materials.

3. **Design Engaging Art Activities**: Choose activities that are developmentally appropriate and support the exploration of art. Encourage play-based learning by integrating different materials such as crayons, markers, paint, and clay.
4. **Integrate the Key Domains**:

    - **Physical Development**: Activities like drawing, cutting, or molding clay support fine motor development.
    - **Social and Emotional Development**: Through art, children can express feelings and communicate ideas.
    - **Approaches to Learning**: Encourage creativity and experimentation with different art materials.

5. **Provide Ongoing Observation and Assessment**: Formative assessment through observation allows teachers to assess whether children are engaging with the materials, making progress in their fine motor skills, and expressing themselves through art.
6. **Incorporate Family and Community**:

Family Involvement

- Encourage parents to participate in art activities at home. Try drawing, painting, and sculpting with their child at home.
- Be open-minded and encouraging about works of art that are sent home from the preschool setting.
- Share art from their homes or donate materials that can be used in a variety of art experiences.
- Come to watch or participate in an art show at school.

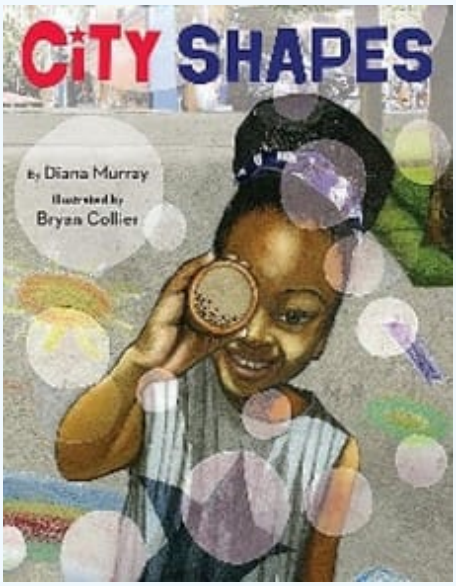
Community Connections

- Invite local artists to discuss their work or plan visits to art galleries.
- Notice and talk about works of art seen in the community.
- Notice and talk about shapes and colors in works of art and in the environment.
- Bring their child to an art museum or areas in the community with public displays of art.

Sample Preschool Art Learning Experience Plan

With a clear understanding of the WMELS framework and steps to incorporate it, let's look at a practical example. The following sample preschool art learning experience plan demonstrates how to apply the WMELS framework in a real-world setting.

Book:



City Shapes

Author:

Diana Murray

Illustrator:

Bryan Collier

Publisher:

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (June 21, 2016)

ISBN-13:

978-0316370929

Age

3 to 5-Year-Olds

Learning Objectives

Children will understand various shapes found in a city and how these shapes can be seen in their environment. They will explore shapes through a read-aloud, discussion, and a hands-on painting activity.

- Children will explore primary colors and basic shapes through painting.
- Children will use fine motor skills by applying paint with brushes and sponges.
- Children will communicate their ideas about colors and shapes.
- Children will explore creative expression and problem-solving during the activity.
- Children will develop cognitive skills by recognizing shapes and understanding how to create artwork using different materials.

Materials Needed

- City Shapes book
- Examples of colorful artwork
- Paint (primary colors)
- Brushes
- Sponges
- A large sheet of construction paper or butcher paper
- Wet wipes or a bowl of water for easy cleanup

Lesson Plan

- **Introduction** (5 minutes)
  - Read City Shapes by Diana Murray.
  - Show examples of colorful artwork and discuss the shapes used in the artwork.
  - Ask children what shapes they already know and how those shapes can be found in the artwork around them.
  - Discuss shapes from the book that appear in their environment.
- **Exploration** (10–15 minutes)
  - Provide children with paint, brushes, and sponges.
  - Allow them to paint freely while exploring primary colors and basic shapes.
  - Encourage children to experiment with mixing colors and using different tools to create various effects.
  - Relate the activity to shapes from the book, encouraging them to incorporate the shapes they learned about into their artwork.
- **Reflection** (5–10 minutes)
  - Have children share their artwork and talk about the colors and shapes they used.
  - Ask open-ended questions to help them reflect on their creative process.
  - For example: "How did you make that circle?" or "What colors did you mix to make purple?"
  - Encourage them to talk about shapes they noticed in the book and how they used those shapes in their own artwork.

Assessment

Fine Motor Skills: Observe how children grip and use the paintbrushes and sponges. Are they using control and precision in their movements?

Language Development: Listen to children describe their work using color and shape vocabulary. Do they use the terms “circle,” “square,” or “triangle” when discussing their art?

Social and Emotional Development: Note how children interact and express their emotions through their art. Are they excited to share their work? Do they collaborate with peers during the process?

Approaches to Learning: Observe children’s curiosity in exploring the paint and tools. Are they persistent in trying different materials or methods? Do they ask questions or explore how to make different shapes or patterns?

Cognition and General Knowledge: Assess children’s ability to recognize shapes and colors while they create their artwork. Are they able to relate their creative decisions to their prior knowledge (e.g., using familiar shapes like squares or triangles)?

Family Engagement Ideas

Coloring Sheet: Send home a "coloring sheet" related to the shapes and colors explored in class for families to complete together.

Art Gallery Walk: Invite families to join in an art gallery walk showcasing the children's artwork, where children can explain their creative process and share their learning with their families.

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) Alignment

With the sample lesson plan outlined, we can now examine how this activity aligns with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) across various developmental domains. This alignment ensures that the art activity not only fosters creativity and expression but also supports children's growth in physical, social-emotional, language, cognitive, and learning approaches.

Health and Physical Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Health and Physical Domain Lesson Plan Example

A. Physical Health and Development	B. Motor Development	C. Sensory Integration
Performance Standard	**B.EL. 2**: Exhibits eye-hand coordination, strength, control, and object manipulation	
Developmental Continuum	Uses strength and control to perform complex fine motor tasks.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	Can control a marker, crayon, or pencil to create shapes.	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	These are the behaviors children are demonstrating in the activity, and they are related to the sample behavior above because the children are controlling art tools. • The child can control a paintbrush to paint and manipulate the bristles. • Child uses scissors with control to cut out shapes. In the art activity where children use brushes, sponges, and other tools to apply paint, they will demonstrate control over their movements as they grip the paintbrush and sponge, coordinating their hands and eyes to apply the paint with precision, which is a direct reflection of **B.EL. 2**. Just as children control crayons, markers, or scissors, they will control the paintbrush and sponge to create different textures and shapes. By using various tools and applying paint in a purposeful way, children engage in tasks that require small-muscle use, enhancing their strength and fine motor coordination, which aligns with the continuum of developing strength and control in motor tasks. This art activity fosters fine motor coordination by requiring children to grip, maneuver, and manipulate tools with growing precision, helping them build on their ability to use materials in creative and functional ways.	

Social-Emotional Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Social-Emotional Domain Lesson Plan Example

A. Emotional Development	B. Self-Concept	C. Social Competence
Performance Standard	B.EL. 1: Develops positive self-esteem	
Developmental Continuum	Exhibits positive self-concept and confidence in his/her abilities	
Sample Behavior of Children from WMELS Book	After painting a picture, child wants adult to write a story about it and insists that the picture be put on the refrigerator.	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in learning experience to develop this)	In the **shape activity**, children are encouraged to take pride in their creations. As they paint shapes and use colors, they develop confidence in their abilities. After completing their artwork, children may request to display it on the refrigerator, which shows that they value their work and recognize their creative accomplishments. This aligns with the **B.EL. 1** performance standard, as the activity fosters a positive self-concept and encourages children to feel proud of their creative expression.	

Language Development and Communication Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Language Development and Communication Domain Lesson Plan Example

A. Listening and Understanding	B. Speaking and Communicating	C. Early Literacy
Performance Standard	B.EL. 2a: Uses vocalizations and spoken language to communicate.	
Developmental Continuum	Uses language to effectively express feelings and thoughts, describe experiences and observations, interact with others, and communicate effectively in group activities and discussions.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	During a group discussion on fire safety, the child listens to others and waits his/her turn to express thoughts such as, “We had a fire at our house, and my mom said we all had to get out of the house at once!”	

A. Listening and Understanding	B. Speaking and Communicating	C. Early Literacy
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	In the **shape activity**, children participate in group discussions where they share their artwork with peers, listening to others and expressing their own thoughts about the shapes and colors they used. For example, a child might say, "I used a big blue triangle because triangles are strong," and listen as others describe their art. This aligns with **B.EL. 2a** by promoting the use of language to express feelings and thoughts, describe their artwork, and interact with their peers in a group setting. The activity encourages children to take turns speaking, actively listen, and communicate effectively during the group discussions, helping them develop social language skills and learn how to engage in meaningful conversations.	

Approaches to Learning Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Approaches to Learning Domain Lesson Plan Example

A. Curiosity, Engagement, and Persistence	B. Creativity and Imagination	C. Diversity in Learning
Performance Standard	B.EL. 2: Expresses self creatively through music, movement, and art.	
Developmental Continuum	Explores the process of using a variety of artistic materials, music, and movement.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	Child uses crayons, paintbrushes, markers, chalk, etc., to mix colors and draw simple pictures. Or, Child explores a variety of materials such as glue, colored rice, macaroni, glitter, cotton balls, etc., to create pictures.	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	In the **shape activity**, children are encouraged to experiment with various art materials like paintbrushes, sponges, and crayons, exploring different ways to create shapes and colors. This aligns with **B.EL. 2**, as children engage creatively with materials to express their ideas. The activity promotes creativity by allowing children to manipulate different art tools and materials, much like the sample behavior, where children use various tools and materials to create pictures. This creative exploration fosters self-expression, imagination, and the development of artistic skills, which are key components of the **Creativity and Imagination** domain.	

Cognition and General Knowledge Domain (Highlight the Sub-Domain that Applies)

Cognition and General Knowledge Domain Lesson Plan Example

A. Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving	B. Mathematical Thinking	C. Scientific Thinking
Performance Standard	A.EL.1: Uses multi-sensory abilities to process information.	
Developmental Continuum	Uses senses to generalize and apply prior learning.	
Sample Behavior of Children from the WMELS Book	Child uses a variety of ways to use crayons, markers, scissors, and paper to create "works of art."	
How Sample Behavior relates to your lesson (Include what children are doing in the learning experience to develop this)	In the **Shape Activity**, children use multiple sensory experiences to explore and discover as they paint and manipulate various materials. The use of **brushes**, **sponges**, and **crayons** engages children's senses of **touch** and **sight** while they experiment with colors and shapes. This allows them to apply prior learning about shapes and colors in new ways as they solve the problem of how to create different shapes and patterns. For example, children may use a **paintbrush** to create a circle or a **crayon** to draw a triangle, making decisions based on their knowledge of how the tools work and how they can manipulate the materials to achieve their desired result. This exploration and problem-solving demonstrate the child's ability to generalize prior knowledge of shapes and colors and apply that knowledge in a creative and meaningful way. This aligns directly with **A.EL.1**, supporting cognitive development through multi-sensory engagement and problem-solving.	

Conclusion

By following this approach and integrating the key elements of the WMELS framework, educators can ensure that children are engaged in developmentally appropriate art activities that promote growth in multiple domains, such as physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and language development. The book *City Shapes* serves as a foundational resource to introduce children to shapes in their environment, enriching the art activity and helping children connect the real world with their creative expression.

Teachers can make the following suggestions to families to facilitate their support of the creative arts for their children:

- Try drawing, painting, and sculpting with the child at home.
- Embrace dramatic play at home. Provide props, costumes, space, and time.
- Show interest in their play and play with them.
- Turn on the music and move with their children.
- Incorporate dance and movement into everyday routines.
- Tap and clap to the rhythm of songs and encourage children to do the same.
- Notice and talk about works of art seen, and songs and music heard at home and in the community.
- Notice and talk about shapes and colors in works of art and in the environment, sounds heard, episodes of dramatic play
- Incorporate dramatic play into a variety of activities, such as reading and going on outings or trips.
- Bring the child to an art museum or areas in the community with public displays of art, community concerts, family-child music classes, community dance performances, and movement programs.

- Be open-minded and encouraging about works of art that are sent home from the preschool setting, children's spontaneous musical performances, and children's dramatic play
- Share art, songs, music, and dance traditions or movement games from their homes.
- Donate materials that can be used in a variety of art experiences.
- Come to watch or participate in an art show, children's dramatic experiences, or a parent-child dance event[1]



Figure 5.4.2: These children are looking at this three-dimensional piece of artwork. (Pxhere, CC-BY-4.0)

References

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5.5: Planning Art Experiences Using the WMELS Teaching Cycle

Introduction

In Chapter 4, we explored how to create meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging social studies lessons using the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) Teaching Cycle. In this chapter, we will apply a similar approach to planning art experiences, ensuring that the teaching cycle is reflected in our lesson planning and aligns with the children's developmental progress.

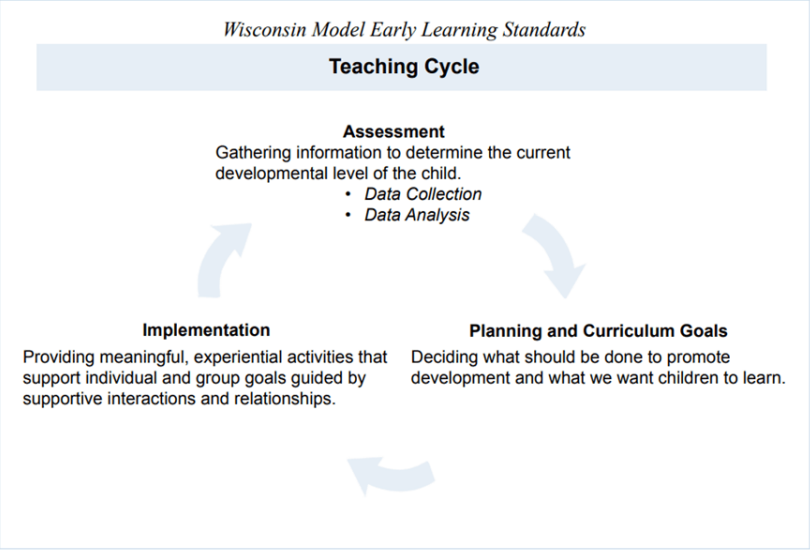


Figure 5.5.1: Teaching Cycle

WMELS Teaching Cycle Overview

Observation (Assessment in WMELS Teaching Cycle)

Purpose: Understand the children's current skills, interests, and developmental progress through their interactions with art materials and activities.
Key Action: Teachers observe children's engagement with different art forms.
Example: Ms. Lara observes children during free art time, noting their preferences for shapes and designs.

Documentation

Purpose: Capture evidence of children's artistic expressions, behaviors, and learning.
Key Action: Teachers document the children's artwork and related behaviors.
Example: Ms. Lara takes photographs of children's artwork and writes down observations about their preferences.

Reflection & Planning (Planning & Curriculum Goals in WMELS)

Purpose: Reflect on the observations and plan the next steps in children's learning and artistic exploration.
Key Action: Teachers analyze the documentation to design future art activities.
Example: Ms. Lara plans an art activity that encourages children to experiment with combining shapes and lines.

Implementation (Implementation in WMELS)

Purpose: Put the planned art experiences into action.
Key Action: Teachers facilitate the activity by providing the necessary art materials and guiding children through the process.
Example: Ms. Lara sets up an art station with stencils, markers, and paints, encouraging children to experiment with shapes and lines.

Review and Adjust

Purpose: Evaluate the effectiveness of the art activity and use children's feedback to adjust future lessons and activities.
Key Action: Teachers review the children's responses to the activity and make adjustments for future plans.
Example: Ms. Lara reflects on the children's engagement and plans the next lesson to further explore overlapping shapes and patterns.

Preservice Education Student Application

A preservice education student can effectively reflect the WMELS Teaching Cycle in their art lesson plans for young children, birth to age 6, by integrating observation, documentation, reflection and planning, implementation, and review and adjustment into their instructional approach.

Observation: During the initial phase, the student observes the children's interactions and engagement with art materials and activities. For example, they might watch how children respond to different textures and colors, noting their preferences and creative choices.

Documentation: Next, the student documents these observations through various means such as anecdotal notes, photographs, or children's artwork. This documentation serves as evidence of the children's learning processes and helps track their developmental progress. For instance, capturing children's paintings or notes from a class discussion about their art can provide insights into their understanding and interests.

Reflection & Planning: Using the documented observations, the student reflects on the children's learning experiences and plans subsequent art activities. This involves analyzing the collected data to identify patterns and areas for further exploration. If children show a keen interest in mixing colors, the student might plan a lesson that includes experimenting with color combinations.

Implementation: The student then implements the planned activities, leading the class through engaging and interactive art experiences. They adjust the activities based on the children's reactions and feedback, ensuring that the learning experiences are meaningful and responsive to the children's needs. For example, if children are particularly engaged in a collage activity, the student might extend the activity to include more materials and techniques.

Review and Adjust: Finally, the student reviews the effectiveness of the implemented activities by evaluating the children's engagement and learning outcomes. They make necessary adjustments to future lesson plans based on this evaluation. For instance, after a lesson on color mixing, the student might reflect on the children's responses and decide to incorporate more hands-on activities or field trips to enhance understanding.

By systematically applying the WMELS Teaching Cycle, preservice education students can create dynamic and responsive art lesson plans that cater to the developmental needs and interests of young children, fostering their creativity and understanding of artistic concepts.

Preschool Art Vignette: Exploring Shapes and Lines

- **Observation:** Ms. Lara observes children during free play, noting their preferences for shapes and lines.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lara captures photographs and writes detailed notes on children's artwork.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lara plans an art activity focused on combining shapes and lines to create geometric art.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lara introduces the activity, guiding children through creating their artwork.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lara reflects on the children's engagement and plans future lessons based on their interests.

Toddler Art Vignette: Exploring Texture and Color

- **Observation:** Ms. Emily notices toddlers using their hands to explore texture and color.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Emily documents the toddlers' actions by taking photos and writing down their interactions.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Emily plans a hands-on art activity that encourages sensory exploration.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Emily sets up an art station with finger paints and fabric scraps, guiding toddlers through the activity.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Emily reflects on the toddlers' engagement and plans future activities to support sensory development.

Infant Art Vignette: Exploring Colors and Shapes

- **Observation:** Ms. Lily observes infants drawn to bright colors and simple shapes.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lily takes photos and notes the infants' reactions to the shapes and colors.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lily plans an activity introducing simple shapes and colors using bright toys.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lily sets up a play area with brightly colored toys and guides infants through the activity.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lily reflects on the infants' responses and plans future activities to deepen their visual recognition.

Conclusion

The WMELS Teaching Cycle offers a structured approach to planning art experiences that are responsive to children's developmental needs and interests. By following the cycle of observation, documentation, reflection, planning, implementation, and review, teachers can create art activities that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate. This cyclical process ensures that art experiences are continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of children, fostering creativity, self-expression, and fine motor skills.

Through the vignettes provided, we see practical examples of how the WMELS Teaching Cycle can be applied to various age groups, from infants to preschoolers. Each vignette demonstrates the importance of observing children's interests, documenting their behaviors, reflecting on their developmental progress, planning meaningful art activities, implementing those activities, and reviewing their effectiveness. By adhering to this cycle, teachers can ensure that their art lessons are not only educational but also tailored to the unique needs and interests of each child.

Art activities are particularly beneficial for children's cognitive and emotional development. They provide opportunities for children to explore different materials, express their thoughts and feelings visually, and develop a sense of aesthetics. These activities also support social-emotional development by encouraging collaboration, sharing, and appreciation of diverse artistic expressions.

In summary, the WMELS Teaching Cycle is a valuable tool for educators, helping them to create art experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging. By continuously observing, documenting, reflecting, planning, implementing, and reviewing, teachers can support children's growth and development in a holistic and responsive manner, allowing their creativity and artistic skills to flourish.

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6: MUSIC AND MOVEMENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

6.1: Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Music and Movement Experiences
6.2: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Music and Movement Experiences
6.3: Effective Music Transitions
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6.1: Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Music and Movement Experiences

Introduction

Previous chapters explored planning lessons that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging for social studies and art. Now, we will shift our focus to music and movement, applying these same principles to create engaging learning experiences. The creative arts, including music and dance, are essential to young children's lives, fostering skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, language, communication, mathematics, and social skills. Just like with social studies and art, music and movement activities should be designed to foster children's development across multiple domains—physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and creative. By using observation, documentation, reflection, and planning, educators can tailor music and movement activities that are both developmentally appropriate and personally meaningful for each child. This ensures that the lessons are not only engaging but also aligned with children's interests and developmental stages, providing just the right level of challenge to promote growth.

Aligning Developmental Domains to Music and Movement Activities

Review the images of the HSELOF and the WMELS development domains are provided below.

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/ TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

Figure 6.1.1: Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF), also referred to as the ELOF. (Child Development)



Figure 6.1.2: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Domains

How music and movement activities align with the key developmental domains is explained below.

Physical Development (WMELS Health and Physical Domain)

Music and movement activities often involve large and small motor skills, helping children refine their coordination, balance, and overall physical development. Through rhythm, dance, and movement, children engage in activities that require physical effort and control.



Example Activity: "Shake and Move"

Objective: To engage children in movement that promotes physical coordination and rhythm.

Materials: Music with varying tempos, scarves or ribbons for waving.

Process: Children listen to different music tempos and follow along by moving their bodies. For slower music, they may stretch or sway, while for faster music, they engage in more vigorous movements, such as stomping or jumping.

Developmental Impact: This activity promotes large motor skills, rhythm, and body awareness. It also helps children learn to control their movements and maintain balance while moving to music.

Social-Emotional Development (WMELS Social and Emotional Development Domain)

Music and movement activities provide opportunities for children to express emotions, build relationships with peers, and practice social skills such as cooperation, turn-taking, and empathy. Group activities, such as singing in a choir or dancing together, foster a sense of community and belonging.



Example Activity: "Group Dance Circle"

Objective: To build social connections and practice cooperation.

Materials: Music with a simple beat, space for children to gather.

Process: Children join hands in a circle, and each child takes turns leading a movement or dance step. The rest of the group follows along, encouraging social interaction and teamwork.

Developmental Impact: This activity supports the development of social skills like cooperation, empathy, and turn-taking. It also helps children express their emotions through movement and creates a sense of group unity.

Language Development and Communication (WMELS Language Development and Communication Domain)

Music and movement activities promote language development by encouraging the use of words, phrases, and song lyrics. Children engage in storytelling through movement and singing, which supports vocabulary development, sentence formation, and expressive language.



Example Activity: "Sing-Along with Actions"

Objective: To support language development through song and movement.

Materials: Songs with simple lyrics and accompanying motions.

Process: Educators and children sing songs together, incorporating movements that correspond with the lyrics. For example, "If You're Happy and You Know It" involves clapping, stomping, and other motions.

Developmental Impact: This activity encourages the use of language and enhances comprehension as children follow along with both the lyrics and corresponding actions. It also provides a fun way for children to practice pronunciation and rhythm in language.

Creative and Aesthetic Development (WMELS Approaches to Learning Domain)

Music and movement inherently foster creativity and artistic expression. These activities allow children to experiment with different sounds, rhythms, and movements, giving them opportunities to express themselves in unique and imaginative ways.



Example Activity: "Instrument Exploration"

Objective: To encourage creative expression through sound and rhythm.

Materials: Simple instruments (e.g., tambourines, drums, maracas).

Process: Children explore the sounds that different instruments make. They are encouraged to create their own rhythms and patterns, either individually or as part of a group.

Developmental Impact: This activity supports creative thinking as children experiment with sounds and rhythms. It allows for self-expression and introduces the concept of music as an art form.

Cognitive Development (WMELS Cognition and General Knowledge Domain)

Music and movement activities stimulate cognitive development by engaging children in memory, sequencing, problem-solving, and pattern recognition. These activities can also support language development through song lyrics and the coordination of actions with music.



Example Activity: "Musical Chairs"

Objective: To promote memory, listening skills, and cognitive flexibility.

Materials: Chairs arranged in a circle, music player.

Process: As music plays, children walk around the chairs. When the music stops, they must quickly find a chair to sit in. Each round, one chair is removed, encouraging problem-solving as they work to find a seat.

Developmental Impact: This activity helps children develop their ability to listen attentively, remember patterns, and make quick decisions. It encourages flexibility in thinking as they adapt to the changes in the game.

The Planning Cycle for Music and Movement Lessons

To ensure that music and movement lessons are relevant, meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and engaging, educators should follow a planning cycle that includes observation, documentation, reflection, planning, and implementation. This cycle helps tailor activities to meet the developmental needs and interests of each child, ensuring they are both challenged and supported. See Chapter 4 for a review of the planning cycle.

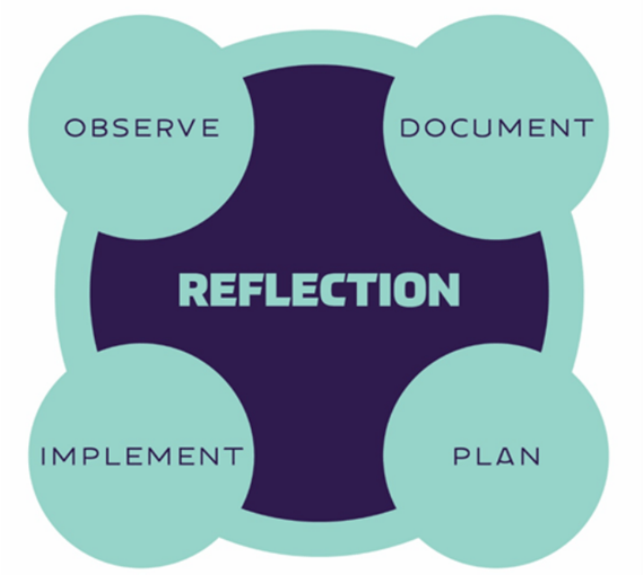


Figure 6.1.3: Curriculum Planning Cycle (Vicki Tanck)

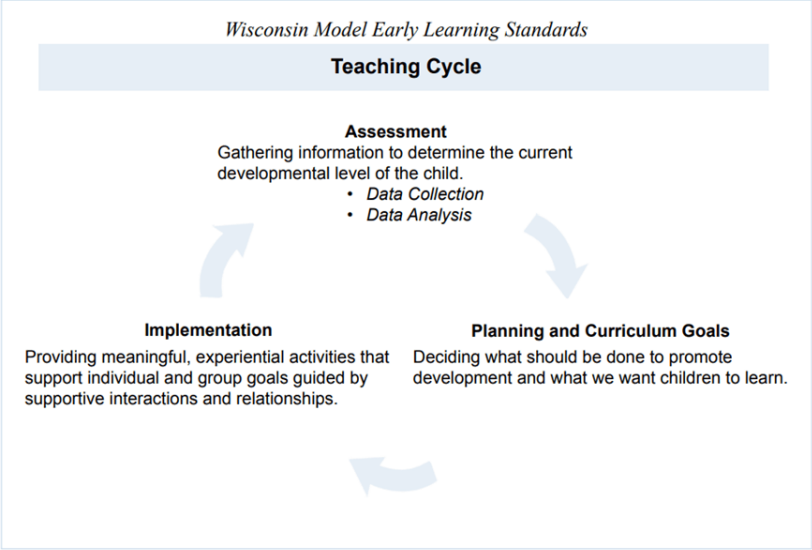


Figure 6.1.4: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

Observation: Observe children's current interests, physical abilities, and responses to music and movement. What types of movements or songs do they enjoy? Do they prefer active dancing or listening to calming music?

Documentation: Keep records of children's engagement with music and movement activities. Note any new skills, songs they enjoy, or areas where they may need further support.

Reflection: Reflect on the effectiveness of the activities. Are the children engaging with the music? Do they seem challenged or overwhelmed? Adjust activities to match their developmental stage.

Planning: Plan activities that build on children's interests while introducing new skills. For example, if children enjoy rhythmic movement, plan activities that introduce more complex rhythms or coordination exercises.

Implementation: Introduce the planned activity with clear instructions, encouraging children to explore, express themselves, and enjoy the music. Provide opportunities for both structured and unstructured exploration.

Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging Music and Movement Activities

Teachers should consider the following recommendations when creating music and movement activities so they are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging.



Figure 6.1.5: Relevance, Meaningful, Challenging

Relevance: Select materials and themes that reflect the children's cultural backgrounds, family traditions, and community roles through music and movement. For example, you might introduce songs or dances from the children's own cultures or community celebrations and traditions. This approach connects them to familiar rhythms, instruments, and movements that resonate with their everyday lives.

Meaningfulness: Allow children to express themselves through music and movement in ways that feel personally relevant to them. Encourage them to share favorite songs or dances from home or community events, fostering a sense of belonging. This encourages children to explore their own cultural traditions while valuing the diversity of perspectives in the classroom. This could involve encouraging children to express themselves through dancing or using instruments from their culture, allowing them to experience music and movement that connect to their lives.

Challenge: Provide activities that introduce new musical styles, instruments, or movement patterns that extend the children's understanding of the world. For instance, exploring songs or dances from different cultures, learning about diverse instruments, or experimenting with rhythm and coordination helps children build new skills, promote creativity, and deepen their understanding of global diversity. For example, using rhythm sticks or introducing simple dance steps can promote motor skills and rhythm while enhancing creativity.

Community Helpers Song: Example Lesson - Social Studies-Related Music Activity for 3-6 Year Olds



This activity teaches about the important roles people play in the community and incorporates key aspects of music and movement, making it educational and fun for 3-6 6-year-olds.

Objective:

To introduce preschoolers (3-6 year olds) to the concept of community helpers (e.g., firefighters, doctors, teachers) through music, while fostering social awareness and encouraging group participation.

Materials:

- Music player
- Pre-recorded community helper song (or create your own)
- Simple props or pictures related to community helpers (optional)

Process:

1. **Introduction to Community Helpers**: Begin by discussing different community helpers with the children. Show them pictures or toys representing various community helpers (e.g., a toy doctor kit, firefighter hat, teacher's desk). Ask questions like, 'What does a firefighter do?' or 'Who helps us when we're sick?'
2. **Introduce the Song**: Teach the children a simple, catchy song about community helpers. For example, you can adapt a familiar tune like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' to create a song about different helpers in the community:

Community Helpers Song:
Community helpers, everywhere,
Doctors, teachers, and firefighters care.
They help us when we're in need,
With kind hearts, they take the lead.
Community helpers, everywhere,
Community helpers really care!

3. **Movement and Actions:** As the children sing, incorporate simple actions that correspond to the helpers. For example:

    - Doctors: Pretend to give a check-up by mimicking a stethoscope around their ears.
    - Firefighters: Pretend to spray water with a hose.
    - Teachers: Mimic writing on a chalkboard or holding up a book.

- Mail carriers: Pretend to deliver a letter.

These actions will help reinforce the roles of community helpers while also allowing the children to engage in physical movement, making it more interactive and fun.

4. **Group Participation:** Encourage children to choose a community helper and come up with their own movement or action to represent that helper. This gives them the opportunity to express their understanding creatively and individually. For example, a child might want to act out a police officer by pretending to direct traffic.
5. **Reflection and Discussion:** After the song, ask the children questions like:

    - 'What was your favorite community helper?'
    - 'Why is it important to have community helpers?'
    - 'What do you think would happen if we didn't have firefighters or doctors?'

Discuss how each community helper contributes to society, and emphasize the idea of working together for the good of the community.

Developmental Impact: What Domains are Children Learning in?

Cognitive Development: The activity helps children understand the concept of community and the roles different people play within it. The song encourages memory and sequencing, as children recall the names and actions of each community helper.

Physical Development: The movement components of the song promote fine and gross motor skills. Children practice coordination as they move their bodies to the music, mimicking the actions of community helpers.

Social-Emotional Development: Learning about community helpers fosters empathy and social awareness. It helps children understand the importance of helping others while also providing an opportunity for children to take on roles and practice cooperation in a group.

Language Development: The song enhances vocabulary as children learn new words related to community helpers (e.g., firefighter, doctor, teacher). Singing together also promotes listening and language comprehension skills.

Why This Activity is Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging:

Relevant: The activity connects to the children's immediate world, where they are likely to encounter community helpers. Whether they've met a firefighter or seen a teacher, the concept is grounded in their real-life experiences.

Meaningful: The song provides an enjoyable and memorable way to learn about community helpers, making the concept of helping others and working together meaningful to young children.

Appropriately Challenging: The song and the accompanying actions are simple enough for preschoolers to understand and perform, yet they encourage imaginative thinking and the use of motor skills. The activity can be adapted for varying developmental stages by adding complexity (e.g., incorporating more community helpers or additional movements).

Hello, Friends Around the World: Example Lesson - Social Studies-Related Music Activity for 1-3 Year Olds



This activity provides a great starting point for introducing young children to social studies concepts, such as cultural diversity and global awareness, through the universal language of music. It's a fun, interactive, and educational way to help toddlers connect with the world around them, emphasizing that communication and language come in many forms, even before speech is fully developed.

Objective:

To introduce toddlers to the concept of diversity and global cultures through music, promoting social awareness, fostering inclusivity, and highlighting the importance of early language development.

Materials:

- Music player
- Simple instruments (e.g., tambourine, small drum, maracas)
- A world map or globe (optional)
- Pictures of children or animals from different countries (optional)

Process:

1. **Introduction to Global Diversity:** Start by showing a world map or globe and explaining that there are many different places in the world where people live. Point to a few countries and explain that in some places, people speak different languages, wear different clothes, and eat different foods. This introduces the concept of global diversity in an age-appropriate way, while fostering curiosity about the world.
2. **Introduce the Song:** Teach the children a simple and repetitive song about greeting people around the world. Use a familiar tune like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' and adapt the lyrics to reflect greetings in different languages:

Song: 'Hello, Friends Around the World' (To the tune of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star')
Hello, friends from far away,
We can say 'hi' in many ways!
'Hola,' In Spanish, is what we say.
'Bonjour,' in French, means good day!
Hello, friends from far away,
Hello, friends, have a great day!

3. **Incorporate Instruments and Movements:** As the song plays, invite the children to use simple instruments (like tambourines or maracas) or clap along to the beat. Encourage them to sway or move gently to the rhythm, reinforcing the idea of community and togetherness through shared music. You could also add simple hand movements like waving to represent 'hello' or mimicking a 'wave' from different parts of the world.
4. **Engage with Visuals:** To reinforce the concept of global diversity, show pictures of children or animals from different countries while singing. For example, point to a picture of a child from India, China, or Mexico, and say, 'Look! These children live in different places, but we can all say hello with music!' This helps the children connect the song to real-world images and fosters a sense of belonging and respect for cultural diversity.
5. **Interactive Participation:** Encourage the toddlers to say 'hello' or 'hi' in any language they know (even if it's just 'hi' or 'hello'). Even if toddlers cannot yet speak the specific 'hello' words, they can participate by waving their hands or making sounds that communicate friendliness and joy. This highlights the importance of nonverbal communication and emphasizes that language development comes in many forms, especially at a young age. Toddlers can express themselves through gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions, all of which are crucial for early language development.
6. **Reflection:** After the song, ask simple questions like:

    - 'Can we say hello to our friends in another language?'
    - 'How do we say 'hello' in our home?'
    - 'What country do you think is far away from here?'

Keep the conversation light and focused on making connections between what they know and the new information about the world.

Developmental Impact: What Domains are Children Learning in?

Physical Development: The use of instruments and hand movements helps toddlers develop fine motor skills and coordination. Clapping, swaying, or shaking instruments promotes gross motor control and rhythm awareness.

Cognitive Development: By listening to the song and engaging with the visuals, toddlers begin to grasp the concept of diversity and how people from different places may have different ways of communicating. It also helps toddlers make connections between their own lives and the broader world.

Social-Emotional Development: The activity promotes inclusivity and empathy by introducing the idea that people around the world are different but also share common experiences like music and greetings. Singing together fosters a sense of belonging, social bonding, and cooperation.

Language Development: Singing simple songs with repetitive, easy-to-remember lyrics supports language development. The song introduces new words, such as 'Hola,' 'Bonjour,' and 'hello,' helping to expand toddlers' vocabulary. Even if toddlers cannot yet pronounce these words, they are still absorbing language through listening, repetition, and their participation in nonverbal communication like waving or smiling. This early exposure is essential for language development and encourages communication through both verbal and nonverbal means.

Why This Activity is Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging:

Relevant: The activity introduces toddlers to the concept of global diversity, something that is both simple and relevant to their early learning. It also encourages socialization through shared music-making, which is an activity they are naturally drawn to.

Meaningful: By using familiar, repetitive tunes and connecting the song to real-world visuals, the activity makes the concept of global greetings relatable and engaging. It fosters an early understanding of cultural diversity in a way that feels personal and fun.

Appropriately Challenging: The song and movements are simple enough for toddlers to follow, with repetition helping them understand the connection between the words and the actions. The addition of instruments gives them the opportunity to participate actively, which enhances their engagement and learning. Even if they are not yet able to speak all the words, their ability to wave, clap, and make sounds that represent 'hello' shows early social and communicative participation.

Hello, Baby Around the World: Example Lesson - Social Studies-Related Music Activity for Infants (0-12 Months)



This activity is a wonderful way to introduce infants to social studies concepts like global diversity and connection to others through the universal medium of music. It promotes social-emotional bonding, early language exposure, and sensory engagement, all while being simple and soothing for the youngest learners.

Objective:

To introduce infants to the concept of global diversity and the idea of connection to others through music and sound, fostering early social-emotional development and cultural awareness through simple, engaging songs.

Materials:

- Music player
- Soft instruments or items to create gentle sounds (e.g., a small drum, tambourine, or a soft rattle)
- A world map or globe (optional, for visual aid)
- Soft scarves or fabric for waving (optional)

Process:

1. **Introduction to Global Diversity:** Start by gently talking to the infants. Explain, in simple words, that there are many different people around the world who may look different and speak different languages, but they all say 'hello' in their own way. You can point to the globe or world map to help orient them to the idea of different places. ****Note:**** Infants won't fully understand the concept yet, but exposure to the sounds and the visuals will help lay the groundwork for future learning.
2. **Introduce the Song:** Sing a simple, repetitive song with easy-to-understand lyrics, designed to calm and engage the infant while subtly introducing the concept of diversity. Use a familiar tune like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' to make it soothing and approachable. Here's a simple version you could sing:

Song: 'Hello, Baby Around the World' (To the tune of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star')
Hello, baby, wave hello,
In the world, we all say 'hello.'
In Spanish, 'Hola' is what we say,
In French, 'Bonjour' means good day.
Hello, baby, wave hello,
In the world, we all say 'hello.'

3. **Gentle Movement and Sound:** While singing, gently rock or sway the infant in your arms to the rhythm of the song. You can also use soft scarves or fabric to wave in the air slowly, mimicking the waving motion of saying 'hello.' For infants who are old enough to engage visually, hold the scarves or fabric in front of them so they can watch the movement. If the infant shows interest, softly tap a small instrument or rattle in rhythm with the song. The sound of the instrument should be gentle and soothing, not loud, to avoid startling the baby.
4. **Engage with Soft Sounds:** While singing the song, you can incorporate soft, gentle sounds from different cultures (e.g., a soft bell, wind chime, or gentle drumbeat) to represent diverse cultures. This introduces infants to a variety of sounds in a very calm and subtle way. For example, after each 'hello,' you could play a gentle sound that could represent different cultures, such as a soft drumbeat for Africa or a light chime for Asia. This introduces infants to the idea of diversity through sound, which they can connect with their sense of hearing.
5. **Calming and Bonding:** While singing and moving gently, focus on maintaining eye contact and creating a calming, safe environment for the infant. The purpose of this activity is to foster a sense of security, connection, and awareness of different people, even if the infant cannot fully grasp these concepts just yet. ****Important Note:**** This activity is designed to help infants develop early social and emotional skills, laying the foundation for recognizing sounds, rhythms, and social cues in the future.
6. **Reflection (Optional for Caregivers):** After the activity, caregivers can reflect on the baby's responses, such as smiling, cooing, or moving in response to the music. Caregivers might also note if the infant seems particularly calm or engaged during certain moments, which helps understand the baby's preferences for rhythm, sound, and movement.

Developmental Impact: What Domains are Children Learning In?

Physical Development: The gentle rocking or swaying motion, combined with soft hand movements (such as waving scarves), supports the infant's physical development, especially in terms of proprioception (the sense of their body's position) and coordination as they engage with the rhythm of the song.

Cognitive Development: While infants are too young to understand language, exposure to rhythm and repetition through music helps stimulate cognitive development, laying the foundation for later language learning. The song introduces simple concepts like greetings, and even at this early age, the infant begins to recognize patterns in sounds.

Social-Emotional Development: This activity encourages bonding between the caregiver and the infant through song, movement, and eye contact. It helps infants begin to associate positive emotional connections with social interaction, fostering a sense of security and comfort in relationships.

Language Development: Though infants are not yet speaking, they are actively learning language through listening. The repetition of simple words like 'hello' and the use of different cultural greetings (like 'Hola' and 'Bonjour') contribute to the infant's early exposure to language, even if they are not yet able to speak it. The soothing rhythm of the song also supports the development of listening skills, which are foundational for later speech.

Why This Activity is Relevant, Meaningful, and Appropriately Challenging:

Relevant: This activity introduces infants to the idea that there are different people in the world who say 'hello' in various ways. It provides exposure to cultural diversity through sound, which is an important concept even at this early age, even if they cannot yet fully comprehend it.

Meaningful: The song, along with the movement and sounds, creates a meaningful experience for the infant. They are not only exposed to a cultural concept but are also actively participating in a calm, engaging, and sensory-rich environment, which helps them feel safe and connected.

Appropriately Challenging: While the activity is simple, it offers just the right level of engagement for an infant. The repetition and gentle rhythm are soothing, but they also help develop early social, emotional, and cognitive skills. The addition of sounds from different cultures encourages the infant's curiosity and responsiveness to diverse stimuli, which are foundational for later learning.

Conclusion

By aligning developmental domains with music and movement activities, educators can create learning experiences that are not only enjoyable but also relevant and appropriately challenging. These activities provide children with the opportunity to express

themselves, develop new skills, and build relationships with their peers. Through careful observation, documentation, reflection, and planning, educators can tailor music and movement lessons to meet the individual needs of each child, ensuring that the lessons are both engaging and developmentally appropriate.

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6.2: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Music and Movement Experiences

Creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate music and movement activities for young children involves integrating their backgrounds, interests, and developmental stages. Just as we create culturally relevant art experiences, we must approach music and movement lessons with similar care to ensure that activities engage children meaningfully while promoting their social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.

Principles for Planning Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Music and Movement Lessons

To ensure music and movement lessons are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, educators must consider the children's age, developmental level, and the cultural contexts they come from. These three factors—age-appropriateness, individual-appropriateness, and social- and cultural-appropriateness—serve as the foundation for planning any activity.

Age-Appropriateness

Educators should use established theories and research on child development to inform the selection of activities, materials, and interactions. Activities must align with the developmental stages of children, providing an optimal balance of challenge and support.

Individual-Appropriateness

Music and movement lessons should be tailored to meet each child's unique needs, interests, and strengths. This involves customizing activities to ensure meaningful engagement for all children, accommodating those who are more advanced as well as those who are still developing foundational skills.

Social- and Cultural-Appropriateness

Incorporating an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the children into lesson planning is crucial. This includes using music, movements, and traditions that resonate with the children's family experiences. Additionally, educators must consider linguistic diversity and design activities that promote inclusion for all children, regardless of their linguistic background.

Developmentally Appropriate Music and Movement Experiences

> What a child has heard in his first six years of life cannot be eradicated later. Thus it is too late to begin teaching at school, because a child stores a mass of musical impressions before school age, and if what is bad predominates, then his fate, as far as music is concerned, has been sealed for a lifetime.
>
> —Zoltán Kodály, Children's Day Speech, 1951

Arts as a Means of Expression for Young Children

How important are the arts as a mode of expression for children? Children, especially very young children, cannot express themselves fluently either through speech or writing, two modes of communication that adults use almost exclusively. Instead, children express themselves through movement, sound, and art. If they can express themselves through these modes, it is logical that they can learn through them as well.

Many times, however, adults are at a loss to understand or interpret what it is children are saying to us, or to appreciate how profound it might be. Mark E. Turner (2008), building upon the work of Edwin Gordon and Reggio Emilia, thought considerably

about children's representation through the arts. He sought to provide authentic ways for children to express themselves and developed scaffolding to better harness and understand children's musical development. As Turner states, the idea that the "performing arts" must always be performed onstage to be valid detracts from their use to develop and explore the emotional, cognitive, social development, and human potential.

Music for Young Children

Children's voices, after all, are their first instrument—a child's first exceptionally pleasant musical experience is likely to be hearing lullabies from a parent or guardian, and then vocally experimenting with his or her own voice. Kodály graded learning in small steps for the very beginner learners, starting with three-note songs (sol, mi, la) and expanding gradually to four, five, and six notes and beyond. For the youngest, songs with three notes are an excellent place to start, because these children will not have much difficulty imitating or matching these pitches and can be successful from the outset.

Music for Children Birth to Three Years Old

Music activity for infants and toddlers engages the child's aural and physical being. Such age-old activities include tickling, wiggling, bouncing, and finger playing.

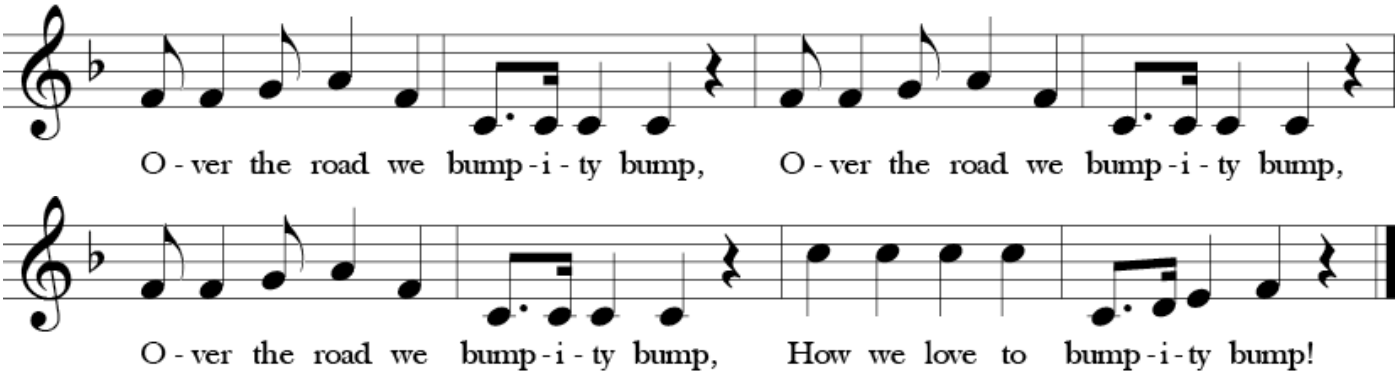
At this level, musical play creates and reinforces the special personal bond between an adult (or older child) and infant, while also introducing music to the child. For newborns and very young children, speaking a rhyme and wiggling toes connects sound to a pleasurable and intimate act, as well as introducing the idea of rhythm and phrasing to newborns and young children.

Below are a few of the rhymes and songs particularly good for newborns and toddlers. They include some very familiar nursery rhymes and action games appropriate for this age group. Keep in mind that almost any nursery rhyme can be used for these activities, as long as they have a steady beat, which luckily most of them do.

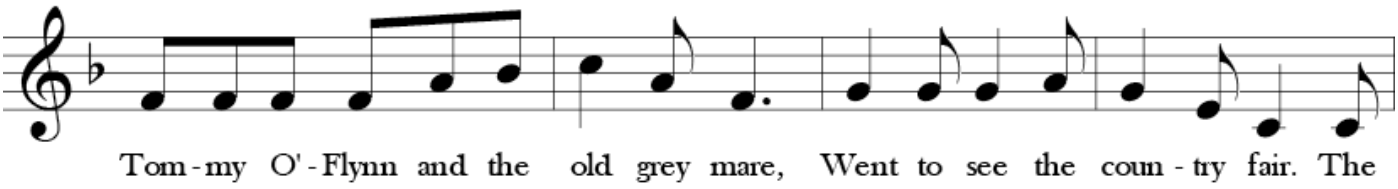
Bounces

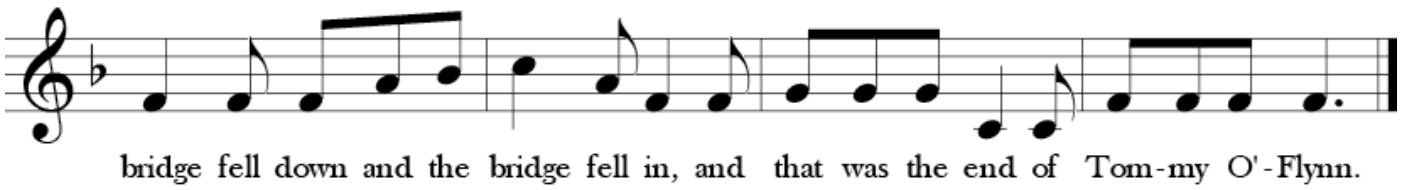
For newborns to three-year-olds, having them feel the beat in their bodies, aided by adults, is called "bounces," based on the experience of bouncing a child up and down on a knee or lap.

Bumpity Bump



Tommy O'Flynn





Tommy O'Flynn and the old grey mare (bounce child on knees)

Went to see the country fair

The bridge fell down and the bridge fell in (open knees and let the child drop a bit)

And that was the end of Tommy O'Flynn

Wiggles

Wiggles are those activities involving the wiggling of fingers or toes. "This Little Piggy Went to Market" is another wiggle with which you may be familiar.

The first little pig danced a merry, merry jig

The second little pig ate candy

The third little pig wore a blue and yellow wig

The fourth little pig was a dandy

The fifth little pig never grew to be big

So they called him Tiny Little Andy

Tickles

Tickles involve exactly that—tickling the child either all over or just in the stomach, usually ending in lots of giggles!

Slowly, slowly, very slowly up the garden trail (*crawl hands up baby starting from feet)*

Slowly, slowly, very slowly creeps the garden snail (*continue crawling)*

Quickly, quickly, very quickly all around the house (*tickle all over)*

Quickly, quickly, very quickly runs the little mouse (*continue tickling)*

My father was a butcher (*make chopping motions on child's body)*

My mother cuts the meat (*make cutting motions on child's body)*

And I'm a little hot dog

That runs around the street (*tickle all over)*

Pizza pickle pumpernickel

Pizza, pickle, pumpernickel (*flash one hand wide, then the other, then roll arms*)

My little one shall have a tickle! (*tickle child*)

One for your nose (*tickle child's nose*)

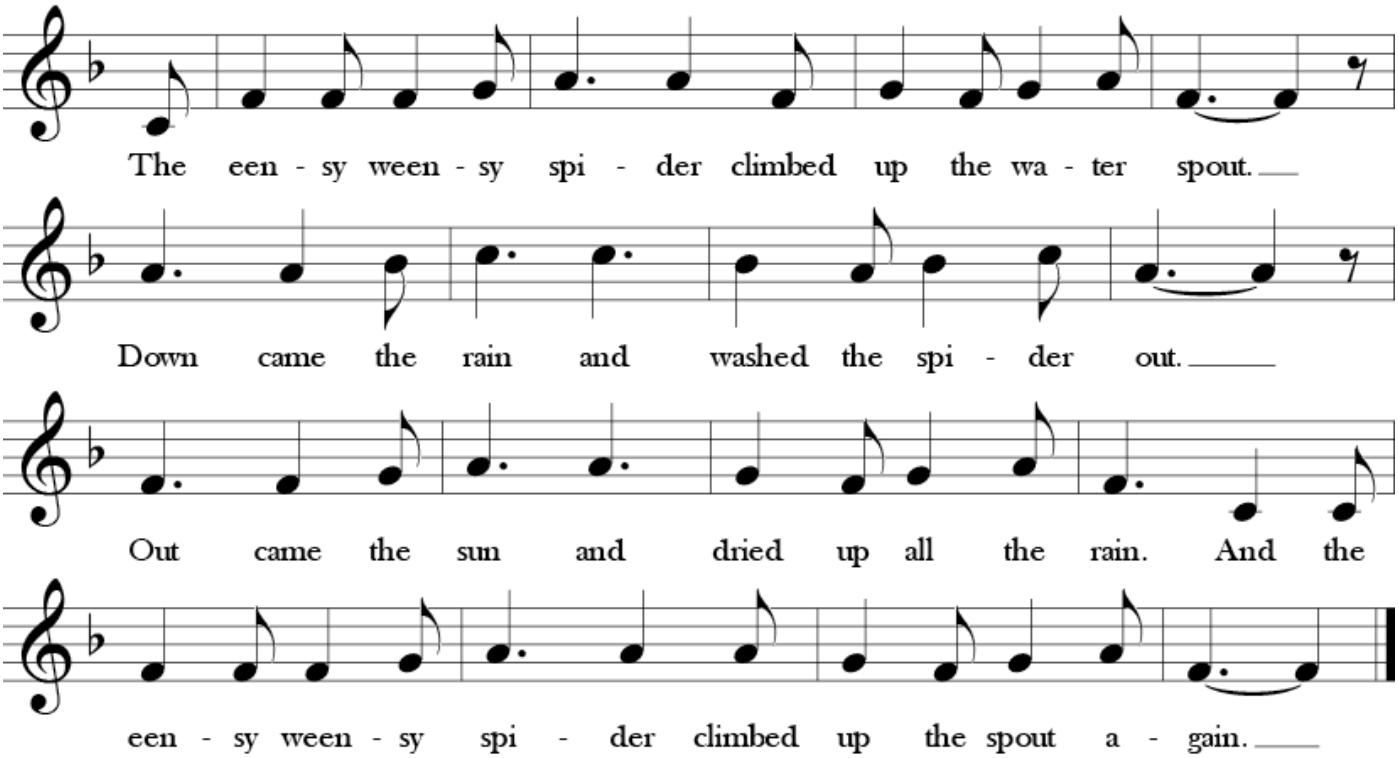
And one for your toes (*tickle child's toes*)

And one for your tummy, where the hot dog goes! (*tickle child's tummy*)

Finger Play

Finger play songs can also be types of *tickles*. The most common finger play song is the "Eensy, Weensy Spider."

Eensy Weensy Spider



Tapping

For an infant, the parent would take the child's foot or hand and tap it to the beat of the music. If the child can tap by themselves, that will also work.

Clapping (Nine+ Months)

As children develop physically, they can clap their hands either together or against those of another. The well-known "Patty Cake" is a good example.

Patty Cake

Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man

Bake me a cake as fast as you can

Roll it and pat it and mark it with a "B"

And put it in the oven for baby and me!

Hot Cross Buns

Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns

One a penny, two a penny

Hot cross buns.

Pease Porridge Hot

Pease porridge hot

Pease porridge cold

Pease porridge in the pot

Nine days old.

Responding to the Beat: Moving to Music

Responding to a musical beat is an innate part of what it means to be human, and even the youngest children can begin to feel music, either by moving to the beat or having an adult help a child move to the beat (Feierabend, 2001).

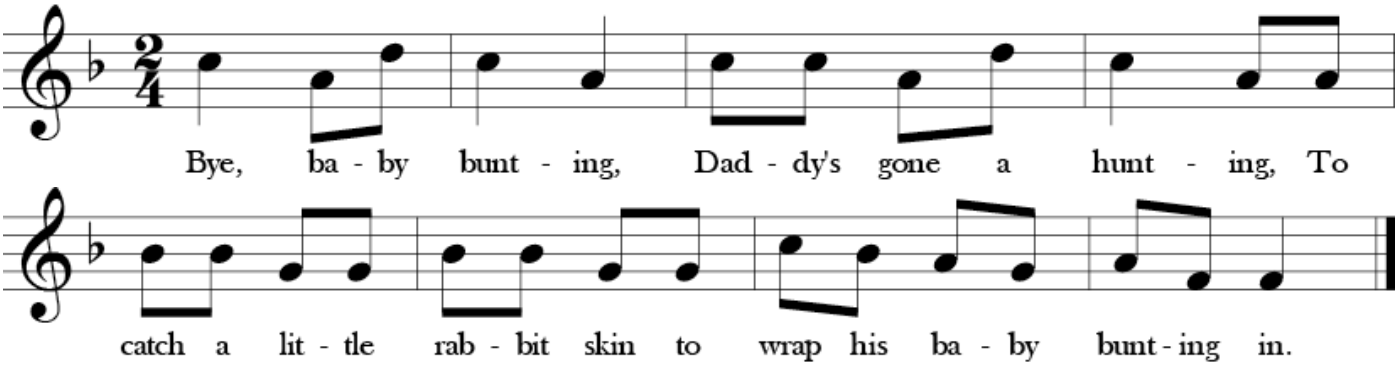
The simplest thing to do is to find recordings of quality music and play songs with an even, steady beat and have children move, clap, tap, patsch, hit an instrument, or walk to that beat.

An extended possibility is to create a story, miming movements that reflect a steady beat while telling a simple narrative. For example, a leader begins by miming actions such as teeth brushing, bouncing a ball, or eating food from a bowl, and the group imitates them. All movements are done to the beat (e.g., teeth brushing, up down up down). At the end of the leader's turn, the children have to remember the "storyline."

Lullabies

Bye Baby Bunting

English lullaby, 1784



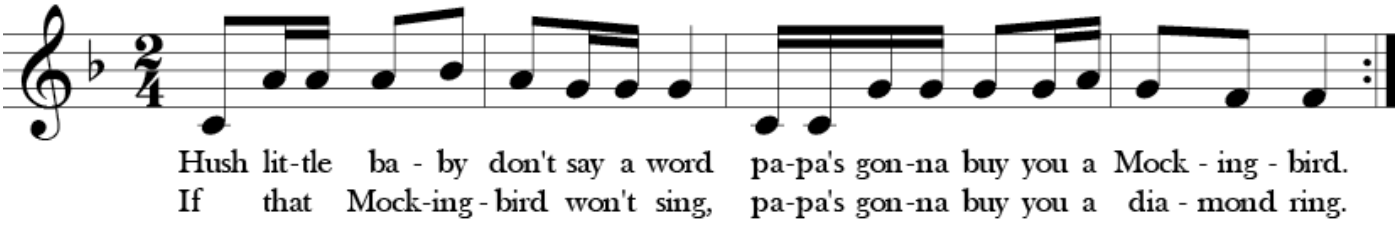
All the Pretty Little Horses

African American lullaby



Hush Little Baby, Don't Say a Word

American lullaby song



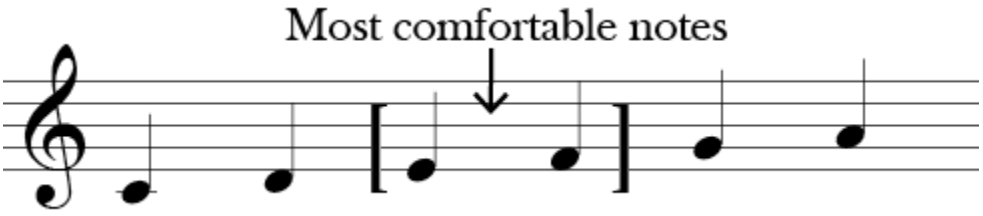
Music for Children Three to Five Years Old

Three- to five-year-olds are capable of singing more complicated songs and doing more complicated games and rhymes, and, of course, are capable of more sophisticated listening. They can also understand some of the basic vocabulary and building blocks of music. It is appropriate to introduce a few concepts when performing songs and games with children, and also to experiment with these concepts, such as changing tempos and dynamics. Some vocabulary to use when pointing out these concepts to younger children includes:

- High—Low (pitch)
- Loud—Soft (dynamics)
- Fast—Slow (tempo)
- Smooth—Detached (articulation)
- Duple—Triple (meter)
- Steady Beat (tempo)
- Timbre (the quality of sound)

Vocal Activities for Three to Five-Year-Olds

Preschoolers (three-, four-, and five-year-olds) have a range of six notes between a middle C and the A above it. Their most comfortable notes are in the middle between E and F.



The goal is to have them not sing too far below the staff or too low in their voices, and not to push or strain their voices too far above this range either. Singing should be light, in the child's head voice, never forced or pushed, and beautiful music-making should be stressed.

Initially, children need to explore their voices to find out what they are capable of, and to start hearing that their voices do indeed have a range to them. It is very good for children to make light, airy, and smooth sounds in their head voice as they find their individual sound.

Begin with some vocal exploration with speech, just getting them to loosen up and find their high, light head voice.

Voice Exploration Speech Exercises

I Take My Voice Up High

I take my voice up high (start low, and slide voice up)

I bring my voice down low (Start high, and slide voice down)

I send my voice out into space (Cup hands around mouth and project)

I whisper all around, whisper, whisper (Whisper line and whisper to neighbors)

Bow Wow

Bow wow, says the dog (medium voice)

Meow, meow says the cat (high voice)

Grunt, grunt says the hog (low voice)

Squeak, squeak says the rat (very high)

Elevator

Have the children pretend their voice is an elevator sliding up and down between floors. They can accompany their vocal exploration with physical movement up and down as well, or the teacher may want to have a focal object, like a puppet, moving up and down that they can follow with their voice.

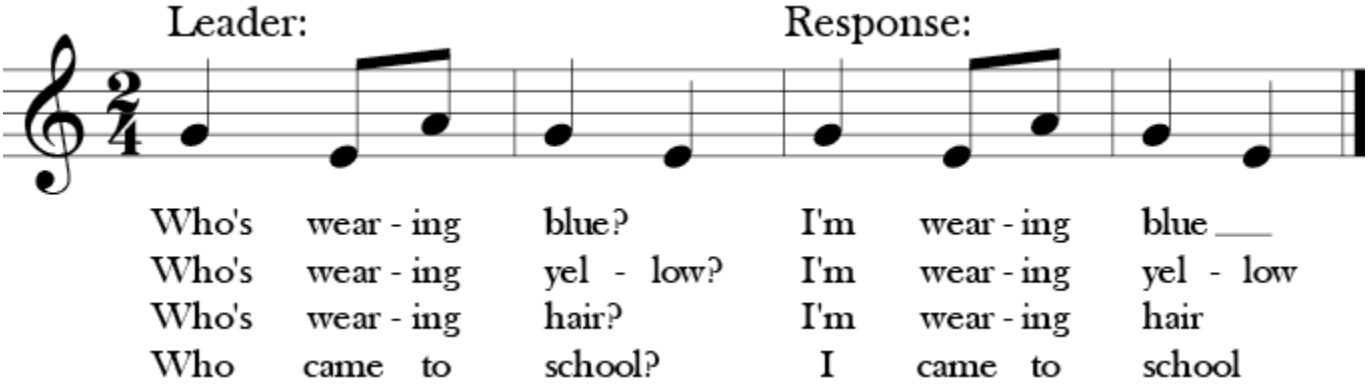
Pitch Matching Songs and Games

Begin with simple but interesting songs with small ranges. These songs can be varied and repeated, and help children sing accurately. "Who's Wearing Blue" is an excellent warm-up or opening activity in a music class. What did the children wear? Do?

See? There are endless, creative opportunities to ask them about their lives in a few notes.

Sol, Mi, La Songs

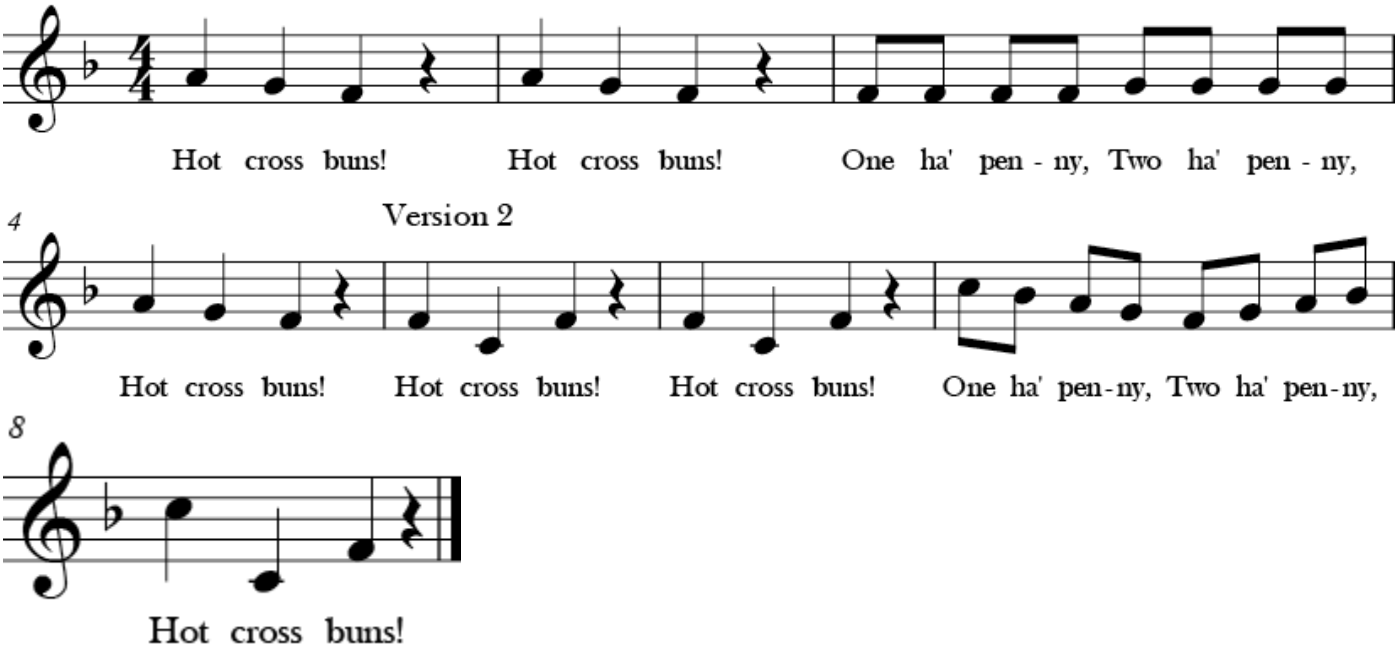
Who's Wearing Blue?



Mi, Re, Do Songs

Hot Cross Buns

English traditional street cry, 1733



Simple Songs in a Limited Range

Rain, Rain Go Away

Traditional children's song, 17th century

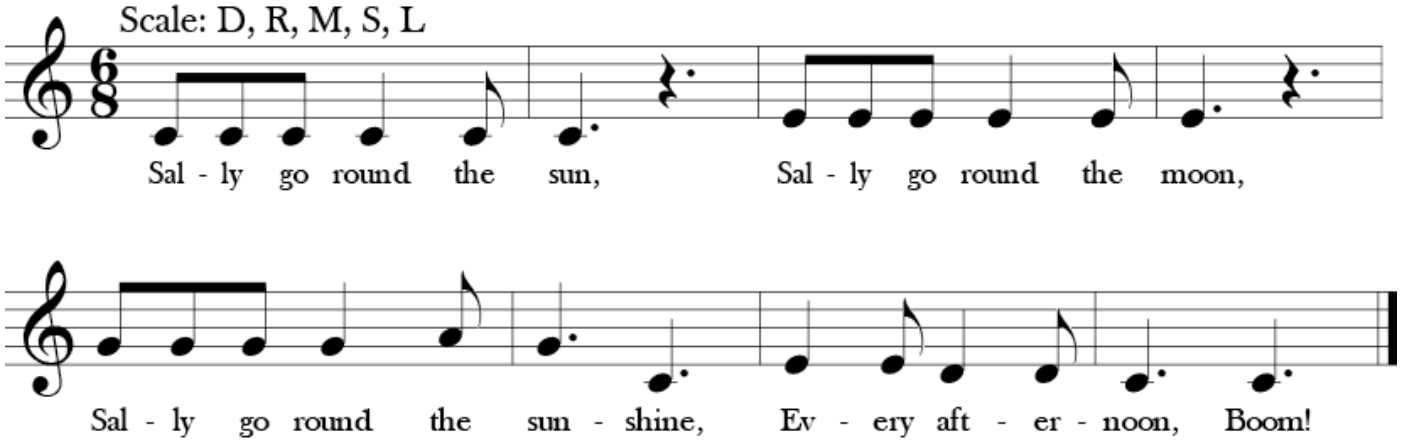


Ring Around the Rosy

English song attributed to 1665 Black Plague, but sources only go back to the 19th century

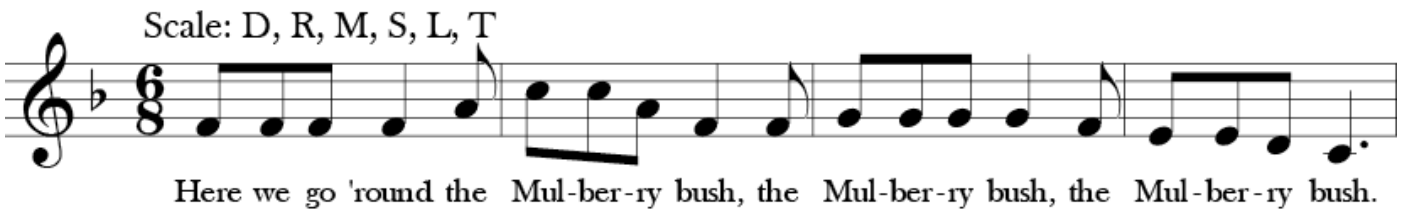


Sally Go Round the Sun



The Mulberry Bush

English nursery rhyme, 1840s





Instrumental Music Activities for Three to Five-Year-Olds

High/Low Pitches: You or a child plays a low instrument (drum, bass xylophone, etc.) and children respond by moving in low space. Then try the same for high-pitched instruments (triangle, tambourine, etc.), having them move through high space.

Fast/Slow Tempo and Loud/Soft Dynamics Game: Similar to above, play instruments in different tempos and dynamics. Switch and mix them up (fast and loud, soft and slow, fast and soft, slow and loud), and if the child doesn't switch, he or she is out.

Contrasting Timbres: Assign a different movement to different timbres. For example, a wood block corresponds to a hop, a xylophone glissando is a leap, and a shaker means to shake. Create an orchestra with half of the class playing and the other half responding. For more advanced children, create a choreographed and composed piece from the game.

Musical Simon Says: Review concepts learned, such as loud/soft, high/low, or fast/slow. Simon says yell loud, Simon says whisper, Simon says sing high, Simon says groan low, etc.

Rhymes and Games

Poetry and rhymes are among the most basic forms of human expression, and both children and adults use poetry, rhymes, and games to tell stories, remember history, fantasize, dream, and play. For young children, the rhyme is magical as they first encounter the powerful sound of rhyming words. Words create rhythmic patterns that captivate a child's attention. The natural rhythms inherent in rhyming can become the basis for exploration, improvisation, vocalizations, and instrumental creativity.

Rhymes with actions, in particular, are enjoyable to children because children live through all of their senses and their whole body. Adding movement helps reinforce the linguistic content of the rhyme or song. Movement and rhymes build cognitive abilities in terms of sequencing physical and linguistic activity, imitation, and internalization.

Adding Movement to Rhymes

There are many types of movement to add to rhymes and games. There are narrative movements, which are mimetic actions that help to illustrate certain words and tell the story (e.g., "I'm a Little Teapot"); abstract movements, which do not carry any specific linguistic meaning, such as waving arms or jumping; and rhythmic movements, which can either emphasize the beat of the rhyme or the rhythm of the text, such as clapping or body percussion.

Narrative Movements: It is easy to add narrative movements to most children's rhymes, as these poems often tell some type of story. Consider the rhyme "I'm a Little Ducky." Adding swimming and flapping motions would be an obvious activity to add. Narrative motions not only bring the story to life but also significantly help children to remember the words to a rhyme or song.

I'm a little ducky swimming in the water

I'm a little ducky doing what I oughter

Took a bite of a lily pad

Flapped my wings and said, "I'm glad"

I'm a little ducky swimming in the water

Flap, flap, flap

Abstract Motions and Rhythmic Motions: Almost any non-locomotive or even some locomotive motions would work here. Abstract motions can easily be rhythmic as well (e.g., swaying to the beat, nodding the head to the beat, tapping the rhythm of the words or beat, etc.).

Walking to the Beat: While a seemingly simple-sounding exercise, walking to the beat requires physical awareness and near-constant mental and physical adjustment to the walking stride in order to fit the beat and tempo of the rhyme.

Example: Take any standard, well-known nursery rhyme. Walk to the beat while saying the rhyme. End precisely on the last beat of the rhyme and freeze!

Advanced: This game can be further developed for older or more advanced children. Once they are walking to a steady beat and stopping precisely on the last beat, have children drop the recitation of the rhyme, and just walk the beat. See if they can all still stop on the last beat! This helps students internalize the beat and phrases of the song.

Steady Beat Games

Pass the Beat: Begin with a simple rhyme or song. While sitting in a circle, have students pass a beanbag around the circle *on the beat*. If the child misses, they are "out" or "in the soup" in the middle of the circle.

Bouncing Beat: Another game is to bounce a ball to the beat of a simple song such as "Bounce High." This is a little more challenging because they have to keep control of their bodies, voices, and a ball.

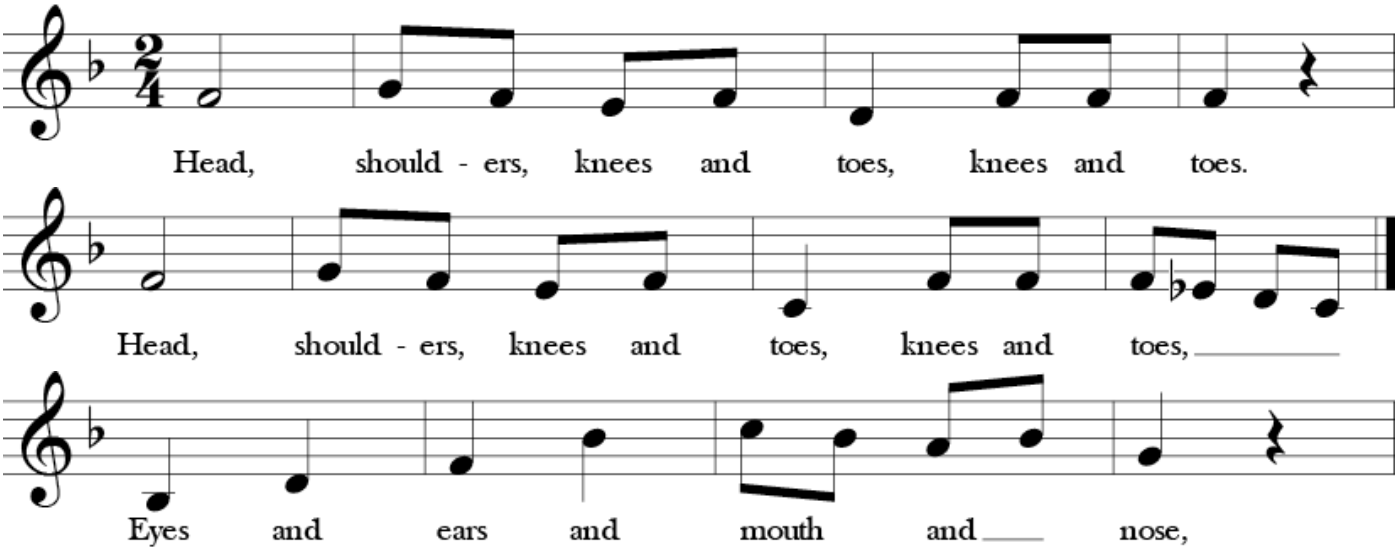
S, M, L song

Bounce High



Action Songs

Head and Shoulders (Key of F)





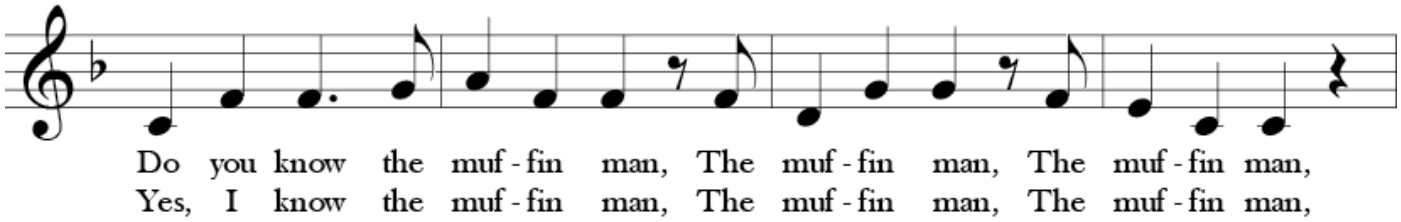
Shoo Fly

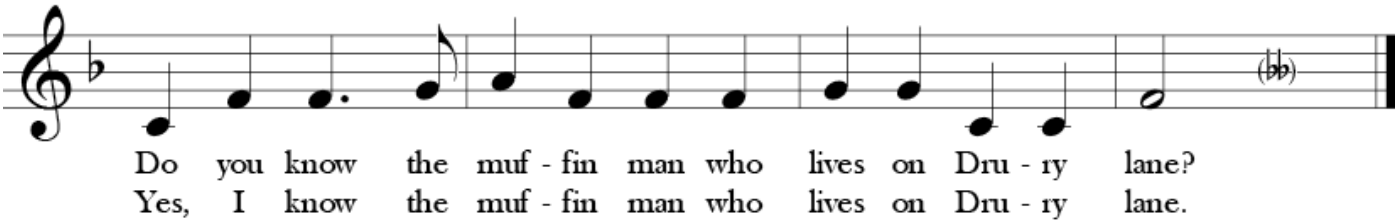
American folk song, 1863



Do You Know the Muffin Man?

English folk song, 1820



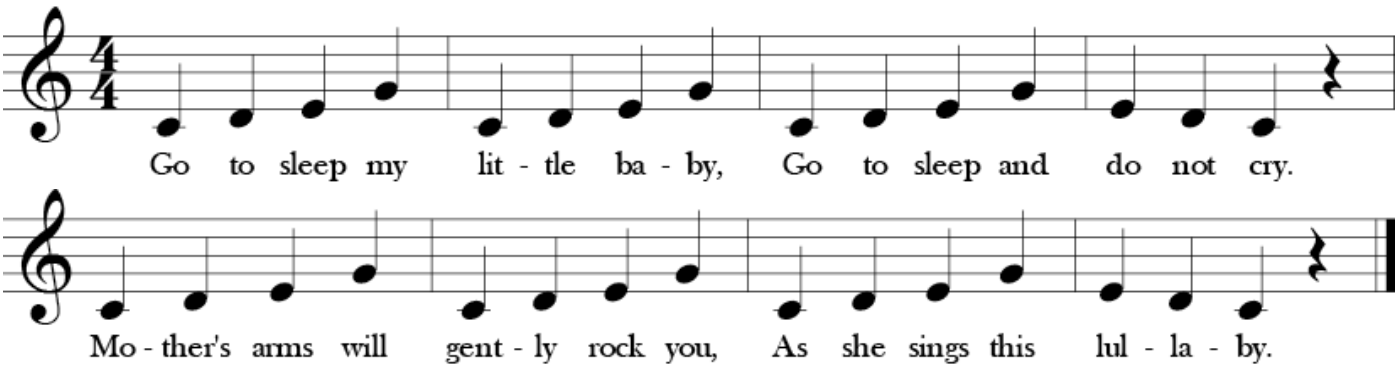


Did You Ever See a Lassie?

American folk song, late 19th century



Go to Sleep



Rhymes

Deedle, Deedle Dumpling

Deedle, deedle dumpling, my son John

Went to bed with his stockings on

One shoe off and one shoe on

Deedle, deedle dumpling, my son John

Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist, Twist, Twist

Can't do this, this, this

Touch his nose, nose, nose

Touch his toes, toes, toes

And around he goes, goes, goes

Rub, Rub

Rub, rub, rub

_____'s in the tub

Rub her/him dry

Hang her high

Rub, rub, rub

Jingle Jive

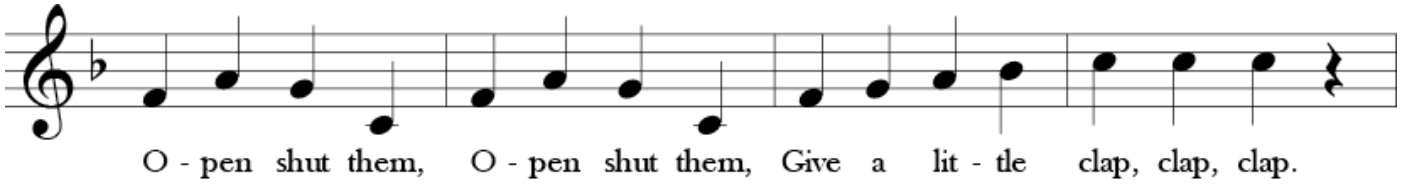
Jingle, jingle, jingle jive

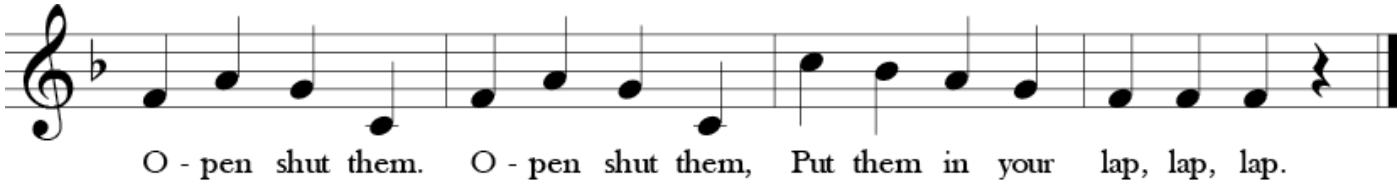
Move until you count to five

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Open Shut Them

This is an action game song where the lyrics are imitated through movement using simple actions in both hands.





Open, shut them, Open, shut them, (*open and shut both hands)*

Give a little clap, clap, clap (*clap on each "clap"*)

Open, shut them, Open, shut them, (*open and shut both hands)*

Put them in your lap, lap, lap (*tap open hands on thighs)*

Creep them, creep them, creep them, creep them, (*crawl hands up to chin)*

Right up to your chin, chin, chin (*tap on each "chin")*

Open wide your little mouth (*open mouth)*

But do not put them in, in, in (*tap on each "chin" again)*

Musical Developmental Milestones in Young Children

Although we might not have thought of it, children's linguistic development is related to their musical development. Research shows a direct correlation between the development of children's speech and their musical/singing ability, with music skills correlating significantly with both phonological awareness and reading development (Anvari et al., 2002).

While teachers of preschool children may have a sense of the linguistic milestones for children, they are less aware of the musical milestones. Since music and language development have a high correlation in terms of development, it is helpful to know what activities children are developmentally ready for musically, and when they are ready for them. For example, most four- and even five-year-olds are not yet able to play a steady beat on an instrument. Expecting them to will only frustrate both the children and you. The following chart indicates musical developmental ability by age and will guide you in introducing musical skills and material that children are developmentally ready for.

Musical Abilities by Age

Musical Abilities by Age

Age	Musical Behaviors	Appropriate Activities	Limitations
0–1 year old (Infants)	Enjoy hearing: • Melodic contour in voice • Being sung to • Hearing a variety of styles of music	Enjoy: • Being rocked, patted, and stroked to music • Responding to rhythmic play and body touch songs • Bouncing or jumping to music • Experimenting with gestures, clapping, and pointing • Playing with rattles and bells	Cannot use language or sing

Age	Musical Behaviors	Appropriate Activities	Limitations
1–2 years old (Toddlers)	• Are aware of musical sounds • Demand repetition • Delayed response during music time	• Create their own made-up songs • Sing simple 1–2 word songs • Enjoy voice inflection games • Enjoy making random sounds on instruments • Improvise their own lyrics to traditional songs • Respond to musical stimuli • Perform rhythmic movement and movement patterns • Clap to music, steady beat • Move and respond to signals and sounds, and silent games	Cannot sing “in tune” but can maintain melodic contour Developmental Issues: “Centering” (pre-operational stage) can fix a child’s attention on one perceptual feature. Difficulty seeing the larger transformational picture of some activities, as attention is diverted by one feature.
3-year-olds	• Prefer to sing beginning on their own pitch • Increasing ability to match pitches • Sense of musical phrasing • Increasing expressiveness in voice • Find it easier to pat thighs rather than clap Enjoy: • Manipulating objects while creating songs • Repeated songs • Having their own movements/ ideas copied by others	• Reproduce recognizable songs • Explore musical sounds with their voices and instruments • Random exploration of xylophones, percussion instruments, and voices • Maintain a steady beat • Handle mallets and drum beaters • Move spontaneously to music • Respond to sound and silence games	• Cannot reverse thought (i.e., can’t reason back to the beginning) • Cannot play a repeated xylophone pattern Developmental Issues: • Responds to abstract or iconic musical notation: • Pictures • Hand signs • Movement/motions • Cannot respond to formal music notation (i.e., notes on a staff)

Age	Musical Behaviors	Appropriate Activities	Limitations
4-year-olds	• Awareness of beat, tempo, volume, pitch, and form • Sings a wide variety of songs • Sings in D–A range • Critique their own song-making efforts • Aware of the tonal center	• Perform individualized musical exploration and play; large motor movement is best. • Have the ability to step to the beat • Repeat short movement sequences, simple rhythms, echo, pitch contour, melodic fragments, formality within phrases, key stability, and categorization of instruments • Symbolic “pretend” play, songs with stories, acting/pretending • Can perform some musical analysis, such as hearing form (AB, ABA) or distinguishing song phrases	• Group musical activities or coordinated instrumental play is difficult • Cannot perform a steady beat on xylophones • Have trouble discriminating between musical genres
4–5-year-olds	Able to classify sounds as: • High-low • Loud-soft • Fast-slow • Smooth-disconnected (legato-staccato)	• Can reproduce sounds and patterns vocally and with instruments • Able to play simple, repeated instrumental accompaniments to songs and improvise on simple classroom instruments • Improvement in stepping to the beat • 5-year-olds can learn simple dance steps • Organize sounds that express a story or accompany a song Prefer: • Action songs and finger plays (imagination) • Silly words and rhyming songs	Require many opportunities to match pitches and order direction of musical sounds in terms of going up, going down, and staying the same

Try This

Based on the chart above, answer the following in terms of what age is appropriate for each activity.

1. Analyzing/hearing the different sections of a song.

2. Responding vocally using different tones and inflections.

3. Singing the song “I’m a Nut.”

4. Echoing/responding to short, clapped rhythms.

5. Playing a steady beat on the xylophone or other percussion instrument.

6. Seeing abstract images and performing them either on voice or instruments.

Learning Objectives

One of the most basic yet challenging activities to do with children is to teach them a song.

This chapter focuses on the child's singing voice, including their vocal range, selection of appropriate musical material, and methods for teaching a song in a musically meaningful, cognitively stimulating way that lays the groundwork for future integration.

A Child's Voice

One common mistake that adults make when singing with children is that they tend to "pitch" the songs (or sing them in a key), that is comfortable for themselves, but unfortunately, out of a comfortable singing range for the children. Adults sing in a much lower range than children; therefore, pitching a song too low causes children to be unsuccessful at reaching some of the lower notes.

Pitching a song in the wrong range can have significant negative consequences on a child's musical self-esteem. An incorrect key can take away the child's ability to sing the song well or sing the song at all. Singing in a key that is out of a child's range would be analogous to an art teacher giving a creative assignment to students and then placing all of the art materials up on a shelf out of reach for most of them. While a few might be tall enough, most won't be. After a while, they will give up trying to reach the material altogether. Similarly, these are the students who start to believe that they can't sing at all and give up on music.

Good Singing

Although we are used to hearing and singing pop music, a child's voice is not yet ready to sing songs either with such a wide vocal range or with the sophisticated vocal styling or timbre that he or she might try to imitate from pop singers. As children's voices are very light, they should not be pushed out of their vocal ranges too soon. Using a clear, clean, straight head voice rather than chest voice will help to avoid this and will strengthen a child's vocal musculature for a lifetime of excellent singing.

One good habit to help children sing well is to ask them to sing in their head voice rather than their chest voice. Although most songs children hear are pop songs that are placed in the chest, a child's voice is not yet developed, and should not be belting out or pushing from the lower range or chest voice. Head voice requires placing the sound higher up in the "vocal mask" or the face, as if singing from the eyes. Chest voice feels like the sound is emanating from the chest, which tends to create a lot of tension in the throat, particularly in younger singers. The head voice is lighter, more tension-free, and more natural, and therefore more beautiful sounding.

Children's Vocal Ranges

Below are the general ranges of a child's voice.

Preschool–Kindergarten (3–5 years old), C to A



First–third grade (6–8 years old) C to C’



Fourth–sixth grade (9–11 years old) B flat to E’



The strongest notes in a child’s vocal range are right in the middle of their range, around pitches F and G. While they may be able to hit higher or lower notes, these few notes are where they can sing the loudest and most comfortably.

Vocal Warm-Ups for Children

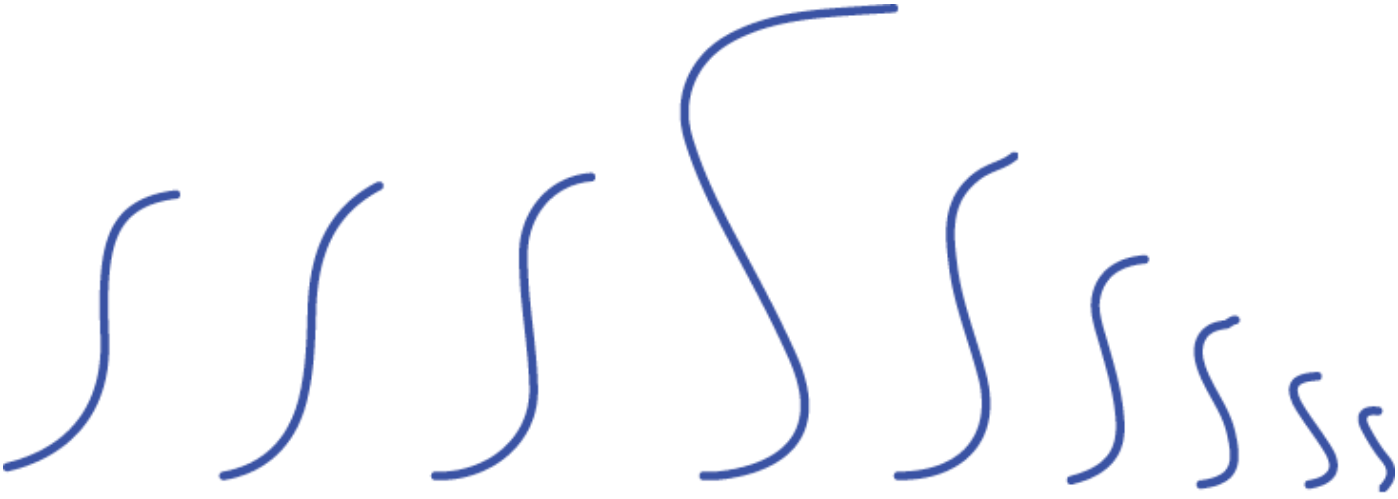
Activities for helping children explore their voices and find their head voice:

Speech Warm-Ups

Activities for exploring the child’s voice and finding the child’s head voice:

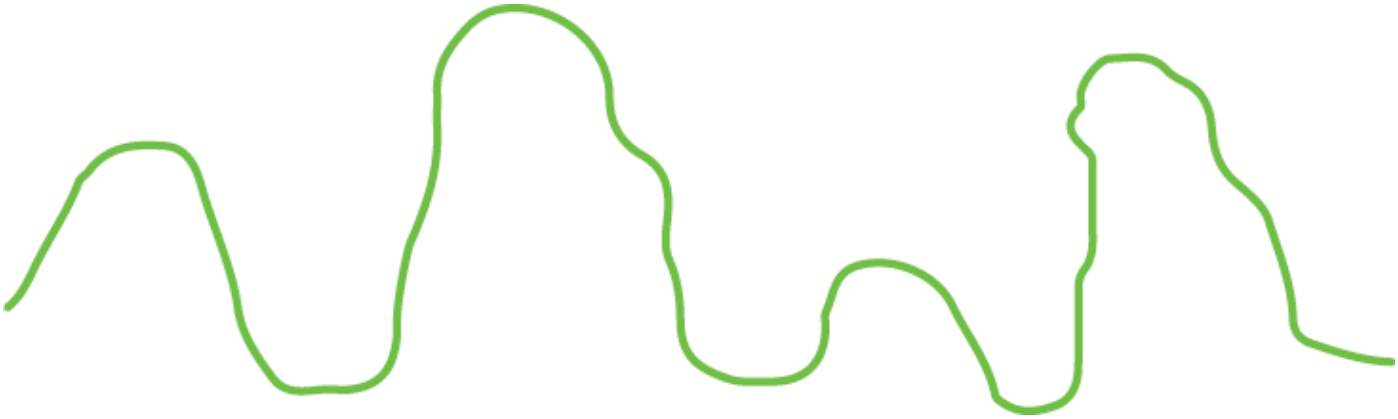
- Have children imitate the sound of a:
  - Wolf, coyote, ghost, owl, siren, train whistle, wind
- Have them “read” abstract notation (lines, dots, squiggles), experimenting with different vocal sounds and timbres in their head voice.
  - What does a blue squiggly line sound like? Green bumps? Red jagged mountains?

Warm-Up 1



Abstract notation: Example 1

Warm-Up 2



Abstract notation: Example 2

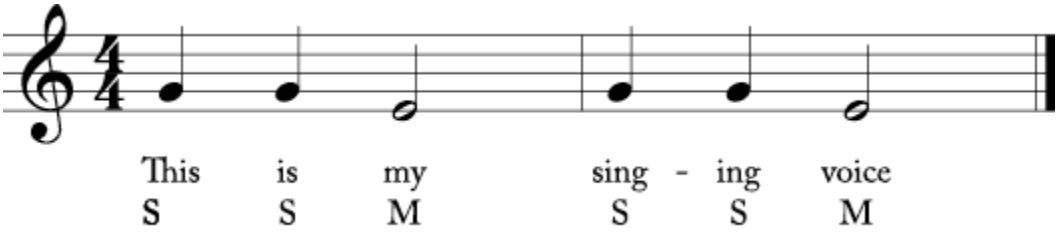
Warm-Up 3



Abstract notation: Example 3

Help Children Find Their Different Types of Voices

- Outside, inside/speaking, whispering, singing voice
  - This is my outside voice! (shouting)
  - This is my inside voice (speaking).
  - This is my *whispering voice* (whispering).
  - This is my singing voice (sung on Sol Sol Mi, Sol Sol Mi).



- High, low, whisper, projecting
  - I take my voice up high (low to high),
  - I take my voice down low (high to low).
  - I send my voice out into space and (shouting/projecting)
  - I whisper all around, whisper all around (whisper).
- High, low, medium

- Bow wow says the dog (medium voice),
- Meow, meow says the cat (high voice),
- Grunt, grunt says the hog (low voice),
- Squeak, squeak says the rat (very high voice).

Teaching a Song at the Elementary Level

The Fundamentals of a Song

It is very important to have practiced and know the song well before attempting to teach it. The same goes for any material you want to teach children. If you yourself don't really know it, you will not be able to teach it successfully.

Techniques for Teaching a Song

While it may seem quite intuitive to teach a song to children, there's actually a great deal to consider. The different ways to teach a song are related to children's different learning styles, such as *aural* and *visual* learning, and the child's appropriate cognitive development, e.g., age and grade development. The first method is to teach a song by rote, a technique also known as aural learning, or "by ear." Rote usually requires a great deal of repetition. The second method is a hybrid known as rote-note, where the song is taught mostly by ear, but also involves the addition of some type of visual element, such as showing some notation. The third method is known as note, which is teaching the song using written notation (e.g., sheet music). These three styles of teaching not only relate to aural and visual learners, but also correlate to the basic cognitive development theories of Jerome Bruner's *modes of representation* and Jean Piaget's *four stages of cognitive development*.

Song Teaching Styles

Song Teaching Styles

Song Teaching Style	Primary Learning Style	Developmental Level	Bruner	Piaget
Rote/Aural Teaching (Sing by ear, no notation)	Aural	Any age, but appropriate for early childhood	Enactive (action-based)	Sensorimotor (learning through senses)
Rote-Note Teaching (Mostly aural, partial notation)	Aural-Visual	Appropriate for lower elementary students (K–2)	Iconic (image-based)	Pre-Operational
Note Teaching (Teaching a song through written notation)	Visual	Appropriate for upper elementary (3–6)	Symbolic (language-based)	Concrete Operational

Rote/aural teaching is enactive (action-based) and can be used at any age through adulthood, but is particularly appropriate for preschool through early childhood (into the lower elementary grades). Motor skills can be added to a song to increase the learning dimensions.

Rote-note teaching is partially iconic (image-based) and appropriate for lower elementary students (K–2) just learning to read, as it involves some type of iconic or image-based representation of music, such as using abstract notation or modified rhythmic or pitch notation.

Note teaching is symbolic (language-based) and more appropriate for upper elementary grades.

Teaching the Whole Song vs. Phrase-by-Phrase

The next decision is whether to teach the song as a whole or by one phrase or line at a time. This consideration will happen regardless of which teaching style—rote, rote-note, or note—is used. Note that the term phrase refers to the music, while line refers to the lyrics or poem.

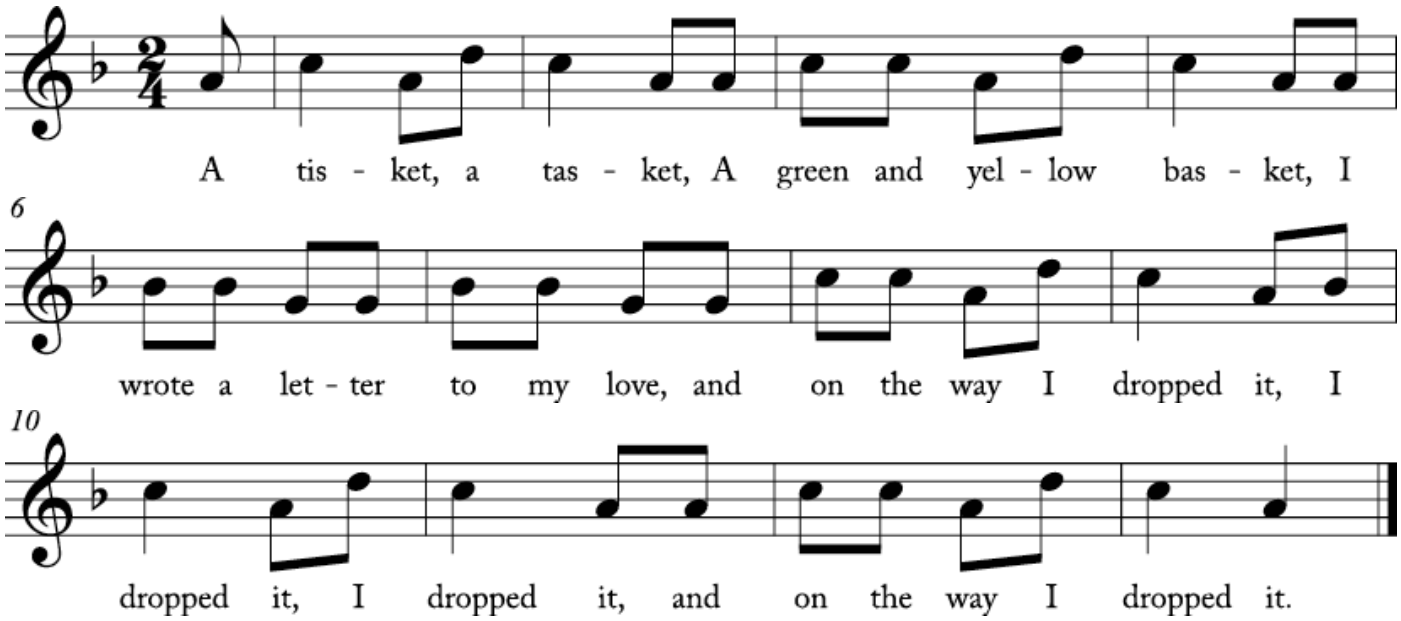
Whole song: Teaching a whole song is exactly what it sounds like...singing the whole song at once and having the students echo the whole song right back. This is good for very short, simple songs; songs that have a lot of repetition either in the words or music, or call and response songs with few variables. The benefit of this is, according to Edwin Gordon's approach, to have the child experience the whole piece first and then learn what the song comprises in detail.

Phrase-by-phrase teaching is best when the song is longer or has a lot of lyrics, or has complex melodies. This is the most common method for teaching more complicated or lengthy songs. In this technique, each phrase is sung by the teacher and then immediately echoed back by the students.

For example, consider the song "A Tisket, a Tasket":

A Tisket, A Tasket

American children's game song, late 19th century



Phrase by Phrase or Line by Line

Teacher: A tisket, a tasket

Students: A tisket, a tasket

Teacher: A green and yellow basket

Students: A green and yellow basket

Teacher: I wrote a letter to my love

Students: I wrote a letter to my love

Teacher: And on the way I dropped it

Students: And on the way I dropped it

If there is more than one verse to a song, after teaching one verse, make sure to repeat the first verse several times with the students before moving on to the next verse.

How to Teach a Song to Children

Preschoolers

Teaching a song to preschoolers can be a fun and engaging activity if done with careful planning and a playful approach. Here are the steps to guide the process:

Choose an Appropriate Song

- Select a song that is simple, repetitive, and age-appropriate.
- Ensure it has a clear melody and aligns with their interests or current themes (e.g., animals, seasons).

Introduce the Song

- Start by introducing the theme or topic of the song. For example, "This is a song about animals and the sounds they make!"
- Use props, visuals, or gestures to create interest (e.g., pictures, puppets, or objects).

Model Singing

- Sing the song yourself first to let them hear the tune and rhythm.
- Use expressive facial expressions, clear pronunciation, and enthusiasm.

Break It Into Sections

- Teach one line or phrase at a time.
- Repeat each line several times, inviting them to echo you.

Use Actions and Movement

- Add simple gestures or movements to accompany the song, which helps with memory and engagement.
- For example, use hand motions for "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or stomping for an action-based song.

Sing Together

- Once they're familiar with the lines, sing the entire song together.
- Keep the pace slow and steady at first, then gradually match the song's natural tempo.

Repetition is Key

- Repeat the song multiple times over a few days or weeks to reinforce learning.
- Change it up by varying the dynamics (e.g., singing softly or loudly) or adding instruments.

Encourage Participation

- Allow children to make suggestions, like changing words to personalize the song.
- Encourage them to take turns leading parts of the song.

Incorporate Play

- Turn the song into a game, like singing "If You're Happy and You Know It" with new actions suggested by the children.
- Use props like scarves, ribbons, or shakers to make it interactive.

Celebrate Effort

- Acknowledge and celebrate their attempts, even if the words or melody aren't perfect.
- End with a big cheer or a round of applause to keep the experience positive and fun.

By keeping the process interactive and fun, preschoolers will be more engaged and enjoy learning the song!

Teaching Songs to Toddlers

Teaching songs to toddlers is a delightful way to support their language, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Toddlers are naturally drawn to music, and songs can be a powerful tool for learning and engagement.

Benefits of Singing with Toddlers

1. **Language Development -** Songs introduce new vocabulary, rhythms, and sentence structures.
2. **Memory and Cognitive Skills -** Repetition in songs enhances memory and helps toddlers learn patterns.
3. **Emotional Expression -** Music allows toddlers to express feelings in a joyful and safe way.
4. **Social Skills -** Group singing fosters collaboration, turn-taking, and shared enjoyment.
5. **Motor Development -** Action songs encourage coordination and gross motor movement.

Steps to Teach Songs to Toddlers

Choose Appropriate Songs

Select simple, repetitive songs with engaging melodies and clear words, such as "*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*", *The Wheels on the Bus*", *or* "*Itsy Bitsy Spider*"

Introduce the Song Slowly

- Sing the song yourself first, using clear and simple language.
- Use gestures or props to help toddlers understand the meaning of the lyrics.

Incorporate Actions

- Add movements or hand gestures to make the song more engaging.

- Example: Use hand motions for "climbing up the spout" in *Itsy Bitsy Spider*.

Repeat Frequently

- Repetition helps toddlers memorize lyrics and feel confident singing along.
- Sing the song during different parts of the day, such as transitions, playtime, or quiet moments.

Encourage Participation

- Pause at the end of a line to let toddlers fill in the word.
- Clap or cheer to celebrate their participation.

Use Visual Aids

- Incorporate pictures, puppets, or props related to the song's theme.
- For example, use a toy bus for *The Wheels on the Bus*.

Adapt for Attention Span

- Keep songs short and interactive to maintain toddlers' interest.
- Be flexible; let toddlers lead or change the pace as needed.

Engage with Instruments

- Add simple instruments like shakers or tambourines to keep toddlers involved.
- Encourage them to shake or tap along with the rhythm.

Tips for Success

- Use enthusiasm and energy to capture attention.
- Incorporate songs into daily routines, such as cleanup or nap time.
- Adjust the tempo or pitch to suit the group's energy level.
- Be patient and allow toddlers to join in at their own pace.

Example Activities

1. **Singing Circle -** Sit in a circle and sing a song together, encouraging each toddler to contribute.
2. **Action Song Parade -** Sing while marching around the room, adding movements to match the lyrics.
3. **Interactive Props -** Use scarves, puppets, or rhythm sticks to complement the song.
4. **Echo Singing -** Sing a line and encourage toddlers to repeat it back, building confidence and memory.

By integrating fun, interactive, and developmentally appropriate approaches, you can make song time a favorite part of the day for toddlers, nurturing their joy of music and learning.

Supporting Music

When children develop an awareness and knowledge of musical elements, children progress in their understanding and ability to control the elements for personal musical expression. Although early childhood music education is primarily about introducing the child to musical sounds and holistic experiences that are of the highest quality, enriched learning occurs when the child has an understanding of and ability to manipulate the music elements of rhythm, melody, form, loudness/softness, tempo, timbre, articulation, and style.

The foundations for Music include responding to music, developing musical skills, and being able to make music.

Music

1.0 Notice, Respond, and Engage

Notice, Respond, and Engage Musical Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Sustain attention and begin to reflect verbally about music; demonstrate familiarity with words that describe music.	1.1 Verbally reflect on music and describe music by using an expanded vocabulary.
1.2 Recognize simple repeating melody and rhythm patterns.	1.2 Demonstrate more complex repeating melody and rhythm patterns.
1.3 Identify the sources of a limited variety of musical sounds.	1.3 Identify the sources of a wider variety of music and music-like sounds.
1.4 Use body movement freely to respond loosely to beat, loud versus quiet (dynamics), and tempo.	1.4 Use body movement freely and more accurately to respond to the beat, dynamics, and tempo of music.

2.0 Develop Skills in Music

Develop Skills in Music Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Begin to discriminate between different voices and certain instrumental and environmental sounds. Follow the words in a song.	2.1 Become more able to discriminate between different voices and various instrumental and environmental sounds. Follow the words in a song.
2.2 Explore vocally; sing repetitive patterns and parts of songs alone and with others.	2.2 Extend vocal exploration; sing repetitive patterns and entire songs alone with others in wider ranges of pitch.

3.0 Create, Invent, and Express Through Music

Create, Invent, and Express Through Music Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Explore vocal and instrumental skills and use instruments to produce simple rhythms and tones.	3.1 Continue to apply vocal and instrumental skills and use instruments to produce more complex rhythms, tones, melodies, and songs.
3.2 Move or use the body to demonstrate beat and tempo, often spontaneously.	3.2 Move or use the body to demonstrate beat, tempo, and style of music, often intentionally.
3.3 Improvise vocally and instrumentally.	3.3 Explore, improvise, and create brief melodies with voice or instrument.

Teachers can support children's development of music foundations with the following:

- Find ways to expose children to music being conducted and performed.
- Provide music areas where children can experience instruments or musical activities as individuals or in a small group.
- Set up a "Science of Sound" area where children can explore and experiment with building sounds.
- Provide a conductor's listening and play area.
- Make instruments with the children.
- Incorporate chant games and songs related to sound production.
- Include a variety of songs that are related to a particular topic area
- Use songs that have movements or gestures that accompany the words.
- Provide children with an opportunity to conduct the group by singing or playing instruments.
- Dramatize poetry and nursery rhymes as a fun way to explore and develop vocal inflection and pitch capabilities in the young singer.
- Invite young children to move through instrumental program music, or music that "tells a story."



Figure 6.2.1: Music with actions is popular in early childhood.

- Encourage children to invent accompaniments with musical instruments.
- Invite local professional musicians or family members to demonstrate and talk about their instruments and the sounds make.
- Invite live musicians for the children to conduct; encourage the child conductor to stop and start, go faster and slower, and

give arm gestures for louder and softer sounds.
- Incorporate books related to music. Include storybooks on conductors and orchestras.
- Encourage children to create simple rhythm patterns.
- Extend learning about different ways to lead a music group.
- Incorporate freeze-and-move games as a fun, simple way to help children develop control of the body in space and to learn and practice fundamental locomotor movements.
- Provide opportunities for independent and group play through musical play kits, which can be stored in a music area.
- Incorporate the use of websites of children's music and other age-appropriate software (if available), to engage children's interest in sound
- Encourage children to be playful and spontaneous when singing—they often sing made-up songs as they play alone or with other children.
- Minimize the use of recorded music when the goal is singing.
- Have the children draw pictures of songs.



Figure 6.2.2: This teacher is introducing the children to a guitar.

Suggested Materials for Music

Types of Materials	Examples of Materials
Found or Recycled Materials	Pots, pans, metal or plastic cans, spoons, chopstick-beaters with cork stoppers for rhythm; Glass jars filled with different levels of water for a water xylophone; Pieces of 12" dowel for rhythm sticks; shakers made of plastic eggs filled with different materials
Basic	Rhythm sets with shakers and simple drums; Singable books; glove puppets for nursery rhyme songs; song maps made of paper or fabric; selection of CDs, CD player, and headset for personal listening
Enhanced	Single-note resonator bells; child-sized xylophones; multiple-sized hand drums; ethnic instruments; child-sized guitar or ukulele; small electronic keyboard; recorder/flute; music software; music videos; songbooks

Types of Materials	Examples of Materials
Natural Environment	Rhythm blocks made of small tree limbs; homemade wooden or stone xylophones suspended on a garden hose; wind chimes made of natural objects
Adaptive Materials	Thicker handles on some materials; instruments in a fixed position (such as a drum on a stand) For children with reduced hearing ability, instruments that resonate and vibrate allow for touching or holding.

Research Highlight

The following points about music and development in early childhood come from Start the Music Strategies, a collaboration by MENC (the National Association for Music Education), the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the U.S. Department of Education. The points were developed by reviewing the research and professional literature.

- We know that music is among the first and most important modes of communication experienced by infants.
- As young children grow and develop, music continues as a basic medium not only of communication, but also of cultural expression and self-expression.
- As preschool children not only listen to music but also learn to make music by singing and playing instruments together (and responding to music in a variety of ways), they create important contexts for the early learning of vital life skills such as cooperation, collaboration, and group effort. Music in an educational setting also begins to teach young children to make judgments about what constitutes “good” music, helping them develop the rudiments of an aesthetic sense.
- Music contributes to “school readiness,” a foundational education aim of the American people for all our children.
- When children develop musical skills and knowledge, they are developing basic cognitive, social, and motor skills necessary for success throughout the educational process and in life itself.

Source:

Start the Music Strategies. Reston, VA: National Association for Music Education, n.d.

Vignette

It is raining outside. Miriam and Pablo, both age three, begin clicking and tapping their fingers on the window glass to imitate the rain hitting the window. Pretty soon, all the children are making different kinds of rain sounds on the window. After a few minutes, the rain comes to a stop, and the children are invited to circle time.

Dance and movement are an inherent part of life and are as natural as breathing. Dance is an elemental human experience and a means of expression. It begins before words are formed, and it is innate in children before they use language to communicate. It is a means of self-expression and can take on endless forms. Movement is a natural human response when thoughts or emotions are too overwhelming or cannot be expressed in words.



Figure 6.2.3: Dancing with wings (Quinn Dombrowski, CC-BY-2.0)

Supporting Dance

1.0 Notice, Respond, and Engage

Notice, Respond, and Engage Musical Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
1.1 Engage in dance movements.	1.1 Further engage and participate in dance movements.
1.2 Begin to understand and use vocabulary related to dance.	1.2 Connect dance terminology with demonstrated steps.
1.3 Respond to the instruction of one skill at a time during movement, such as a jump or fall.	1.3 Use understanding of different steps and movements to create or form a dance.
1.4 Explore and use different steps and movements to create or form a dance.	1.4 Use understanding of different steps and movements to create or form a dance.

2.0 Develop Skills in Dance

Develop Skills in Dance Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.1 Begin to be aware of own body in space.	2.1 Continue to develop awareness of the body in space.

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
2.2 Begin to be aware of other people in dance or when moving in space.	2.2 Show advanced awareness and coordination of movement with other people in dance or when moving in space.
2.3 Begin to respond to tempo and timing through movement.	2.3 Demonstrating some advanced skills in responding to tempo and timing through movement.

3.0 Create, Invent, and Express Through Dance

Create, Invent, and Express Through Dance Milestones

At around 48 months of age	At around 60 months of age
3.1 Begin to act out and dramatize through music and movement patterns.	3.1 Extend understanding and skills for acting out and dramatizing through music and movement patterns.
3.2 Invent dance movements.	3.2 Invent and recreate dance movements.
3.3 Improvise simple dances that have a beginning and an end.	3.3 Improvise more complex dances that have a beginning, middle, and end.
3.4 Communicate feelings spontaneously through dance and begin to express simple feelings intentionally through dance when prompted by adults.	3.4 Communicate and express feelings intentionally through dance.

There are many ways to describe each dance element. Teachers and children can add their ideas to this chart.

Elements of Dance

Body	Space	Time	Energy
Body parts: Head, torso, shoulders, hips, legs, feet **Body Actions:** *Non-locomotor* Stretch, bend, twist, circle, rise, fall Swing, sway, shake, suspend, collapse *(qualities of movement)* ***Locomotor*** Walk, run, leap, hop, jump, gallop, skip, slide	**Size:** Big, little **Level:** High, medium, low **Place:** On the spot (**personal space**), through the space (**general space**) **Direction:** forward, backward, sideways, turning **Focus:** Direction of gaze of the face **Pathway:** Curved, straight **Relationships:** In front of, behind, over, under, beside	**Beat:** Underlying pulse **Tempo:** Fast, slow **Accent:** Force **Duration:** Long, short **Pattern:** A combination of these elements of time produces a rhythmic pattern	**Attack:** Sharp, smooth *(qualities of movement)* **Weight:** Heavy, light **Strength:** Tight, loose **Flow:** Free-flowing, bound, balanced, neutral

Teachers can support children's development of dance foundations with the following:

- Help children become enthusiastic participants in learning dance.
- Warm up! Even though preschool bodies are much more resilient than adult bodies, they should still be gradually prepared for any vigorous activities.
- Use play with games that require dance movements and cooperation.
- Be aware of cultural norms that may influence children's participation.
- Create environments and routines conducive to movement experiences.
- Consider the space, music, costumes, and props you provide.
- Establish spatial boundaries to ensure children have personal space when engaging in movement and dancing.
- Use children's prior knowledge.
- Structure learning activities so that children are active participants.
- Introduce the learning of a dance skill by using imagery.
- Draw on children's interests in dance making.
- Plan movement activities appropriate for various developmental stages and skill levels.
- Incorporate dances that can be performed without moving the entire body.
- Encourage variety in children's movement.
- Teach rhythm using traditional movement games.
- Use the "echo" as a helpful rhythm exercise.
- Use dance to communicate feelings.
- Use movement to introduce and reinforce concepts from other domains.
- Provide opportunities for unplanned, spontaneous dancing



Figure 6.2.4: These children are dancing at group time

Materials for Dance Experiences

Type of Materials	Examples of Materials
Found or Recycled Materials	Boxes, wheels, chairs, hula hoops, balloons, umbrellas, scarves, and other found objects can be used for choreographic variety. Costumes can be assembled from fabrics or donated by families or the community.
Basic	Open rug space; outdoor environment with a defined dance space
Enhanced	Piano, drums, maracas, tambourines, claves, triangles, cymbals, woodblocks, or music system. A local dance troupe may donate children's costumes that are no longer used in productions.
Natural Environment	Palm leaves, feathers, sand, water, and sticks can be used in movement activities.
Adaptive Materials	If a child has a prosthesis, he or she can decide whether to dance with it on or off. If a child uses a wheelchair, props can be useful to extend what the body can do; a few possibilities are balloons tied to a stick, crepe paper streamers, and scarves.

Research Highlight

Research supports the inclusion of dance in a preschool curriculum for a number of reasons, not the least of these being the social–emotional benefits gained from dancing at an early age.

In The Feeling of What Happens, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio describes the body as the theater for emotions and considers emotional responses to be responsible for profound changes in the body's (and the brain's) landscape. Damasio creates three distinct classifications for emotions based on the source of the emotion and the physical response to the emotion: primary, secondary, and background emotions. The primary emotions are the familiar emotions recognizable in preschoolers and adults alike: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and surprise. Damasio describes secondary emotions as social emotions, such as jealousy or envy when a child is eyeing a friend's toy or feelings of pride when accomplishing a difficult task. And of particular interest in a discussion of dance are the background emotions, much like moods. These refer to indications that a person feels down, tense, cheerful, discouraged, or calm, and others.

Background emotions do not use the differentiated repertoire of explicit facial expressions that easily define primary and social emotions; they are also richly expressed in musculoskeletal changes, for instance, in subtle body posture and overall shaping of body movement. Movement and dance are natural vehicles for the expression of these emotions.

Source:

A. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 51–53.

Vignettes

Sammy, a four-year-old in Ms. Huang's class, pulls a top hat off the hat rack and begins to perform controlled balances high on the balls of his feet. Two other children become interested in this performance, and suddenly three children are using hats as creative props to stretch high into the air, with their arms, as they rise up on their toes forming a chorus line; Sammy continues to play the lead, placing a hat on a foot and balancing on one leg like a bird; the other children imitate. The movement progresses to a balancing game, and the children occasionally tumble to the floor, giggling.

Ms. Huang observes the movement game for several minutes and notices the children have taken to making the same shape of the lifted bird leg. She recognizes the children's imagination by commenting on their creative play with the hat; she then suggests to Sammy that he attempt to bring his leg behind him (in a pose resembling a ballet arabesque) while keeping the hat balanced on his foot. The trio becomes more focused with their balances and inventive with the shapes, moving the legs from the front to back and even experimenting with lowering the torso while lifting the leg.

Mr. Soto leads the children in a lively singing and dancing performance of Juanito (Little Johnny). The children shake and twist their bodies while clapping their hands as they sing. "Juanito cuando baila, baila, baila, baila. Juanito cuando baila, baila con el dedito, con el dedito, ito, ito. Asi baila Juanito." (When little Johnny dances, he dances, dances. When little Johnny dances, he dances with his pinkie, with his pinkie, pinkie, pinkie. That's how little Johnny dances.)

In the first verse, they wiggle the pinkie back and forth; in the second, they shake the foot and then wiggle the pinkie. Each time a new verse is sung, a movement is added until the children's bodies are in motion, from head to toe!

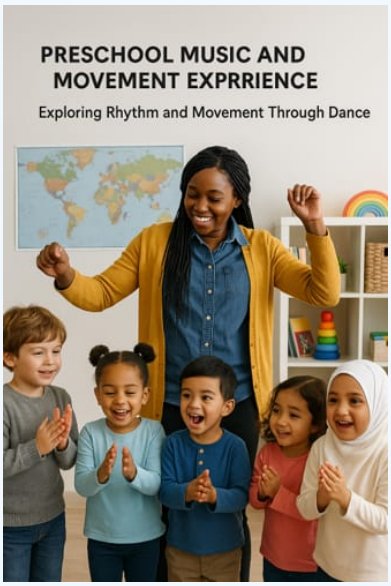
Even Matthew, who is generally reluctant to dance, picks his knees high up and waves his arms exuberantly. Mr. Soto changes the character of the song to Mateo, and Matthew dances into the center of the circle.

Planning Developmentally Appropriate Music and Movement Experiences

Creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate music and movement experiences means selecting materials and activities suited to the developmental stage of the children in your care, which are also culturally and linguistically appropriate. Creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate music and movement experiences involves selecting materials and activities that are suited to the developmental stage of the children in your care. It is essential to integrate their cultural backgrounds and linguistic diversity into these experiences to ensure they are engaging and meaningful. By thoughtfully considering these factors, educators can design activities that promote social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.

The following lesson plan examples illustrate how to apply these principles in practice, showcasing activities tailored to different age groups and cultural contexts.

Preschool Music and Movement Experience: Exploring Rhythm and Movement Through Dance



Setting

Multicultural preschool classroom with children aged 3 to 5 who speak English, Spanish, Somali, and Arabic.

Context

Ms. Carter introduces preschoolers to rhythm and movement using music to foster creativity, enhance motor skills, social interaction, and language development.

Activity

Ms. Carter gathers children in a circle, plays a song with a clear rhythm, and encourages them to clap to the beat.

Children's Responses

- Liam (English): "Clap! Clap!"
- Zara (Somali): "Sacab! Sacab!"
- Mateo (Spanish): "Palmas!"
- Amira (Arabic): "Tasfiq!"

Ms. Carter's Praise

Ms. Carter praises each child's participation, modeling the clapping rhythm in both English and the children's home languages.

Hands-on Exploration

Ms. Carter demonstrates dance moves to match the rhythm, encouraging children to sway, spin, and clap.

Cultural and Linguistic Integration

Ms. Carter asks children about dances or songs they know from home, validating their responses and inviting them to share.

Reflection and Sharing

After dancing, Ms. Carter gathers the children to share their favorite part of the activity and demonstrate their special dance moves.

Developmental Goals

Motor Skills: Practice coordination by clapping, swaying, and dancing.
Social Interaction: Encourage cooperation and shared enjoyment.
Language Development: Learn rhythm and musical vocabulary in English and home languages.
Cultural Awareness: Promote respect for diversity through cultural dance and music.

Toddler Music Experience: Moving to the Beat with Instruments



Setting

Toddler classroom with a multicultural group of children.

Context

Ms. Ortiz introduces toddlers to rhythm and sounds through simple percussion instruments, like drums and tambourines. The goal is to engage them in a sensory-rich, hands-on activity that celebrates the diversity of sounds from various cultures.

Activity

Ms. Ortiz shows the toddlers the instruments and says: "Today, we're going to play some music with our hands! Can you play the drum like this?" The toddlers enthusiastically tap the drums and tambourines, making different rhythms. Ms. Ortiz models the sounds in both English and their home languages.

Children's Responses

- Liam (English): "Boom! Boom!"
- Zara (Somali): "Buuq! Buuq!" (Sound in Somali)
- Mateo (Spanish): "Tambor!" (Drum in Spanish)
- Amira (Arabic): "Tabl!" (Drum in Arabic)

Hands-on Exploration

Ms. Ortiz encourages the toddlers to explore the instruments, making different rhythms with them. "Can you tap the drum slowly? Now let's tap fast!"

Cultural and Linguistic Integration

Ms. Ortiz incorporates songs from different cultures, encouraging the toddlers to identify the instruments used. "Let's hear a song from the Congo! It uses drums just like the ones we have!"

Reflection and Sharing

Ms. Ortiz asks the toddlers to reflect on their favorite sound or instrument.

- Liam (English): "Boom!"
- Zara (Somali): "Buuq!"
- Mateo (Spanish): "Tambor!"
- Amira (Arabic): "Tabl!"

Developmental Goals

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Toddlers use their hands to explore rhythms and develop hand-eye coordination.
- **Sensory Exploration:** The use of instruments helps enhance auditory and tactile exploration.
- **Language Development:** Toddlers learn the names of instruments and sounds in both English and their home languages.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Exposure to different musical instruments fosters an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Infant Music Experience

Setting

A cozy infant room where infants are gently rocked or swayed to soft music.

Context

The goal is to introduce infants to the rhythm and soothing qualities of music, promoting sensory engagement and early bonding with caregivers.

Activity

Ms. Rose plays soft lullaby music and gently sways the infants in her arms. 'Can you feel the music? Let's sway slowly like the wind!'

Hands-on Exploration

As the music plays, Ms. Rose sways the infants gently, promoting visual tracking and body movement.

Cultural and Linguistic Integration

Ms. Rose sings a soft lullaby in both English and the infants' home languages. 'This is a song from my childhood. Let's sing it together!'

Reflection and Sharing

After the activity, Ms. Rose sings the song one more time and gently rocks the infants to calm them.

Developmental Goals

Motor Skills: Infants begin to track movements and respond to gentle rocking.
Sensory Exploration: The soft music and physical movement help infants explore sound and rhythm.
Language Development: Infants are exposed to soothing language through music and songs.
Cultural Awareness: Lullabies in different languages introduce cultural diversity in a gentle, nurturing way.

Conclusion

By thoughtfully integrating cultural backgrounds, developmental needs, and language exposure into music and movement activities, educators can provide meaningful experiences that promote creativity, motor skills, and a respect for diversity in young children. These activities not only enhance children's social, emotional, cognitive, and language development but also foster a sense of belonging and appreciation for different cultures. As demonstrated in the lesson plan examples, creating developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate music and movement experiences is essential for nurturing well-rounded, culturally aware individuals from an early age.

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Vocabulary

abstract movements: movements do not carry any specific linguistic meaning, such as waving arms or jumping

articulation: the approach to playing a note and style of playing in terms of its smoothness, detachment, accents, etc.

aural learning: learning music “by ear”—learning by hearing only (no use of written notation)

beat: a pulse in a piece of music; the basic unit of time in music

binary form: a song in two discernible sections; also referred to as verse-refrain or verse-chorus and designated as AB.

chest voice: singing when the sound feels like it is emanating from the chest or throat

downbeat: the first beat in the measure; beat in a measure that is most accented

duple: two or four beats per measure

dynamics: how loud or soft the music is

head voice: placing the sound higher up in the “vocal mask” or the face, as if singing through the eyes

line: reference to a line of the lyrics or poem when learning music; usually corresponds to a musical phrase

meter: meter determines where the stresses in music are, or how the music stresses are grouped. A triple meter, for example, will have groups of 3 with a stress on the first beat of the group. A duple meter will have groups of 2 with a stress on the first beat of the group.

narrative movements: mimetic actions that help to illustrate certain words and tell the story (e.g., “I’m a Little Teapot”)

note: learning music by reading the notes; reading the music or score in order to play or learn

note-rote: song is taught mostly by ear or repetition, but also shows some iconic notation (written notation)

phrase-by-phrase: teaching a song one line at a time; breaking down the song into individual phrases

pickup: a note or series of notes that preceded the first downbeat of the first measure; also called *anacrusis*

pitch: the frequency of the sound based upon its wavelength; the higher the pitch, the higher the frequency

pulse: in learning music, the pulse indicates to the children the tempo at which you would like to sing the song as well as the song’s meter; “feel the beat”

range: all of the notes in the song from lowest to highest

rhythmic movements: movements that can either emphasize the beat of the rhyme or the rhythm of the text, such as clapping or body percussion

rote: learning through repetition; learning without the use of written music or a score

song phrase: reference to a group of notes in learning music, usually equivalent to a sentence or the length of one line of poetry

tempo: pace in which the notes of a song are sung or played

ternary form: as a song with 3 sections, where the first section returns at the end in exact form and the middle section is different or contrasting; designated as ABA.

tessitura: the part of the register in which most of the tones of the melody or voice part lie

timbre: the quality of sound

triple: three or six beats per measure

unitary: a song with only one section, and no refrain; can be labeled as A.

upbeat: pickup beat (see above)

verse-refrain: a verse corresponds to a poetic stanza of a song; usually distinguished from the chorus or refrain of a song, which has repeated lyrics (e.g., in “Oh, Susanna” the verse begins with “oh I came from Alabama” and the chorus or refrain begins with “Oh, Susanna, oh don’t you cry for me…”)

whole song: teach the whole song at once without breaking it into individual phrases; useful technique for very short songs

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6.3: Effective Music Transitions

In Chapter 1, we discussed the importance of transitions in early childhood education, particularly how they contribute to a structured and engaging learning environment. In Chapter 4, we explored social studies transitions, focusing on how to help children move smoothly from one activity to another while maintaining their attention and promoting learning. In Chapter 5, we applied similar principles to planning art transitions. Now, let's explore how we can adapt these concepts to music and movement transitions, ensuring they are developmentally appropriate and engaging for young children, while also connecting them to **social studies themes**. You may review those chapters for clarification.

Music and Movement Transitions with a Social Studies Focus

There are many effective strategies to introduce a song/movement activity, which are fun and engaging ways to capture children's attention. Always use *an enthusiastic and animated tone to introduce the music activity. Your excitement leads the children to be excited and interested in the upcoming activity.*

Some general suggestions to use with preschoolers, toddlers, and infants are listed below.

Preschoolers

Interactive Storytelling: Begin with a short story that leads into the song. For example, tell a story about community helpers and then introduce the song "The Helpers in Our Town" as part of the story.

Visual Aids: Use pictures or props related to the song's theme. Show images of community helpers and their tools, and then transition into singing the song.

Puppets or Props Incorporate movements or actions that go along with the song. For example, have children mimic the actions of community helpers while singing.

Toddlers

Animal Sounds and Movements: Start with animal sounds or movements that relate to the song. For example, ask toddlers to stomp like elephants before singing a song about community roles.

Simple Questions: Ask engaging questions that lead into the song. For example, "What sound do you think the drummer makes?" and then sing a song that includes those sounds.

Interactive Props or Puppets: Use props like musical instruments or toys that relate to the song's theme. Let toddlers explore these props before starting the song.

Infants

Gentle Interaction: Begin with a calming activity, such as listening to soft music or exploring a toy. Then introduce the song in a soothing manner.

Visual and Auditory Stimuli: Show pictures of community helpers and play related sounds before singing the song.

Tactile Exploration: Provide soft toys or objects related to the song's theme for infants to touch and explore before singing.

These strategies can help make the introduction of the song engaging and memorable for children. Below, you will find more specific transition activities explained for each age group.

Preschoolers:

Songs or Rhymes (Community Helpers Theme)

A song such as the one in the example helps children connect music and movement to the roles of community members and prepares them for a collaborative learning experience. The song may introduce a Community Helpers Movement and Role-Play activity. The Helpers in Our Town is sung to the tune of The Wheels on the Bus. The teacher and the children can think of addition verses to sing for other community helpers.

Example: "Let's sing 'The Helpers in Our Town' before we start our music and movement activity!"



Figure 6.3.1: Community Helpers Songs

The plan below shows how the teacher used the song to introduce the music and movement activity. The teacher may also use pictures or items representing the community helpers as the class sings the song.

Community Helpers Movement and Role-Play

Objective

Preschoolers will engage in movement while role-playing different community helpers, building a deeper understanding of their roles through music and play.

Materials

Community helper hats or props (firefighter helmets, doctor stethoscopes, police officer badges, etc.)

- Open space for movement
- Music player (optional, for background music)

Warm-up and Introduction

- Begin by playing a soft instrumental version of "The Helpers in Our Town" or similar background music.
- Remind the children of the different community helpers they learned about through the song (e.g., firefighter, doctor, police officer, construction worker).

Role Play and Movement

Invite the children to pretend to be community helpers. For example, they can pretend to:

- Be Firefighters: March in place with their hands up as if holding a hose and pretend to "spray" the water.
- Be Doctors: Gently "check" the other children's pretend "patients" by listening with their stethoscopes and giving them a pretend band-aid.
- Be Police Officers: March in place, wave their hands like they're directing traffic, and make "stop" signals.
- Be Construction Workers: Pretend to use tools like hammers or drills while "building" something.

Movement to the Song

As the children act out the roles, sing the song "The Helpers in Our Town" again.

Encourage them to move to the beat as they act out the different roles.

You can stop the music and give a cue like, "Now let's be firefighters!" and start the song again to encourage active participation.

Reflection

After the activity, ask questions like, "What was your favorite role to pretend today?" or "How did it feel to be a helper in our town?"
Reinforce how community helpers work together and play important parts in our lives.

Pictures and Visual Cues (Cultural Diversity Theme)

Using visual cues helps preschoolers understand cultural diversity and encourages curiosity about the world beyond their immediate surroundings.

Example: Show pictures of various musical instruments from around the world and discuss where they come from.
"Look at these drums from Africa and tambourines from Mexico! Today, we're going to make music just like musicians from these cultures!"



Figure 6.3.2: Cultural Diversity Theme

Movement-Based Transition (Geography and Environment Theme)

This movement-based transition ties into geography and the role of people in their environment. It also promotes physical engagement, preparing children for the upcoming music and movement activity.

Example: "Let's pretend we are marching like the people in our community who work in the city. March, march, march like we're crossing a busy street!"



Magic Words (Roles in Society Theme)

This magic word transition connects children's role in the group as musicians, reinforcing the idea of participation and shared responsibility in a social setting.

Example: "Our magic word today is 'Play'. Our instruments will be quiet until I say 'Play". When I say 'Play,' it means it's time to start making music! Ready to be a musician? Play!"



Toddlers:

Simple Question and Answer (Community Roles Theme)

A simple question that invites toddlers to connect the music activity with the role of musicians in a community. It encourages curiosity and active participation.

Example: "What sound do you think the drummer makes in our story? What about the bell?"



Animal Movement (Environmental Exploration Theme)

This encourages toddlers to understand the concept of movement in different environments (e.g., cities or forests) while engaging in fun, active play.

Example: Read/Sing a book about different types of animals, such as Melissa & Doug Children's Book - Poke-A-Dot: The Wheels on the Bus Wild Safari. Then, to dismiss the children to their next activity, say, "Let's stomp like elephants as we march to our play centers, just like the native people who live alongside elephants in Africa and Asia!" Or you might say, "Let's stomp like elephants as we march to our play centers, just like people traveling on a safari!" Each time the class sings the book, dismiss them using a different animal.



Movement Song (Cultural Understanding Theme)

This song invites toddlers to consider the community and cultural aspects of gathering together and moving as a group, preparing them for the upcoming activity. This movement song is sung to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat.



Infants:

Gentle Interaction (Family and Community Theme)

These calming songs listed below emphasize family, community, or connection and would create a peaceful atmosphere for infants, making them perfect for the transition you're looking for!

Example: "Let's listen to this soft music before we start our movement time!"



For calming songs about family or community, here are some beautiful options specifically designed for infants and young children:

1. **"This Little Light of Mine"** (Traditional) – From "*Songs for Children*" by **Pete Seeger** or **The Kiboomers**. This song is calming and uplifting, often sung in a gentle, soothing way, and connects to community and family values.
2. **"The Family Song"** by **The Singing Walrus** – From the album "*Family Songs for Kids*", this song celebrates the importance of family and would provide a calming, familiar tune before beginning movement time.
3. **"I Am a Promise"** by **The Gaither Vocal Band** – This beautiful, gentle song from "*A Family Christmas*", while not necessarily about movement, speaks to the promise of love within the family. Its calm tone would fit well as background music for transitioning infants.

4. **"You've Got a Friend in Me"** from "*Toy Story*" by **Randy Newman** – This gentle and reassuring song speaks to the concept of friendship and community, making it ideal for infants while creating a peaceful transition. It's available in various instrumental versions for a soft background melody.
5. **"Down in the Valley"** (Traditional) – This folk song, as featured in "*Putumayo Presents: Lullaby*" or "*Lullabies and Goodnight*", is soft and calming. It's associated with the comforting feeling of home and family, making it a wonderful choice for calming infants.
6. **"All the Pretty Little Horses"** (Traditional) – Featured on "*Putumayo Presents: Lullaby*", this calming lullaby speaks to a sense of peace and comfort, with themes of family and home.

Object Exploration (Cultural Understanding Theme)

This tactile interaction introduces the concept of community helpers, providing infants with a sensory experience related to the social studies theme.

Example: Give infants a soft, colorful toy representing a community helper (e.g., a plush fire truck or police car).
"This toy helps us remember all the helpers in our community! Let's explore this toy before we get ready to move like community helpers." Or, "Let's explore this toy before we get ready to sing about community helpers."



Calm, Gentle Music (Cultural Traditions Theme)

This soothing transition helps infants connect to cultural traditions, promoting a calm and peaceful movement to the next activity.

Example: Play soft, soothing music from different cultures, such as a lullaby from a different country or a cultural song.
"Let's listen to this calming music from another country as we get ready to explore and play!" Or, "Let's listen to this calming music from another country as we get ready for lunch!"



These music and movement transitions not only make the classroom flow more smoothly but also engage children with **social studies themes** like community roles, culture, environment, and family. Tailoring these transitions to the developmental needs of preschoolers, toddlers, and infants ensures that all children are both prepared and excited for the learning experiences ahead, while connecting to broader social studies concepts that help them understand their place in the world.

Using Music Throughout the Day for Everyday Routines

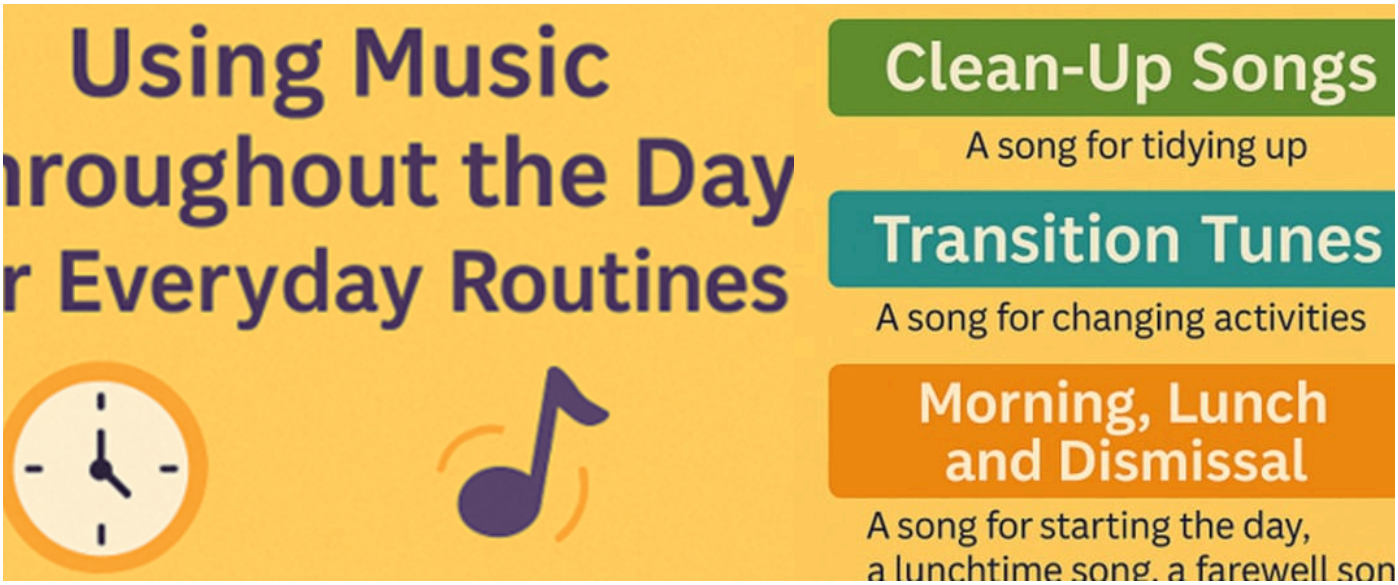


Figure 6.3.3: Different types of music for routines

Using music throughout the day can be a powerful tool to help make transitions smooth and seamless in a classroom setting. Music not only engages children but also provides clear auditory cues that signal changes in activities, helping them understand what is coming next. By incorporating a variety of songs—modern, classical, and children's music—teachers can create a structured yet fun environment that keeps children focused and excited about each part of their day. Whether it's arriving at school, lining up, washing hands, waiting for lunch, getting jackets on, or going home, the right music can set the tone, enhance the mood, and make each transition a positive and enjoyable experience for both the children and the teacher.

Types of Transitions

Arriving at School

Introduction: Using music at the arrival time can set a positive tone for the entire day. It helps create a welcoming and cheerful atmosphere, making children feel excited and ready to start their day. Music can also ease the transition from home to school, providing a sense of familiarity and comfort. Additionally, a lively and engaging song can energize the children, helping them to focus and participate actively in the morning routines. Overall, incorporating music at the arrival time fosters a sense of community and joy, making the start of the day smooth and enjoyable for both the children and the teacher.

Preschool

Modern/Mainstream: "Walking on Sunshine" by Katrina and the Waves

How to Use: Play this song as children enter the classroom. The teacher can greet each child with a smile and a high-five, saying, "Good morning! Ready to shine today?"

Classical: "Morning Mood" by Edvard Grieg

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Let's start our day with some calm music. Take a deep breath and get ready for a wonderful day."

Children's Songs: "Good Morning" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this cheerful song to start the day. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to join in, saying, "Good morning, everyone! Let's have a great day!"

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "The Wheels on the Bus" by Super Simple Songs

How to Use: Play this familiar song to make the arrival fun. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to join in, saying, "Let's sing about the bus as we start our day!"

Classical: "Air on the G String" by Bach

How to Use: Use this classical piece to create a calm atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Let's start our day with some gentle music."

Children's Songs: "Good Morning" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this cheerful song as children enter the classroom. The teacher can greet each child with a smile and a high-five, saying, "Good morning! Let's sing along and get ready for a wonderful day!"

Infants

Modern/Mainstream: “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" by Jewel

How to Use: Play this soothing rendition of the classic lullaby as infants arrive. The gentle melody can help create a calm and welcoming atmosphere. The teacher can softly sing along, saying, "Welcome, little stars! Let's start our day with some beautiful music."

Classical: “Lullaby" by Brahms

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The gentle and familiar melody can help infants feel secure and relaxed. The teacher can say, "Let's listen to this beautiful music and get ready for a wonderful day."

Children's Songs: "You Are My Sunshine" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this cheerful and welcoming song as infants arrive. The upbeat tune can capture their attention and make them feel excited to start the day. The teacher can greet each infant with a smile, saying, "Good morning! Let's have a great day together!"

Lining Up

Using music when lining up can make this routine task more engaging and enjoyable for children. Music provides a clear auditory cue that signals it's time to line up, helping children understand and respond quickly to the transition. An upbeat and rhythmic song can energize the children, making them more enthusiastic about lining up. Additionally, music can help maintain order and focus, as children are more likely to follow instructions when they are set to a fun tune. Incorporating music into lining up routines also adds an element of fun and excitement, turning a potentially mundane activity into a positive experience. Overall, using music when lining up fosters a sense of rhythm and cooperation, making the transition smoother and more enjoyable for both the children and the teacher.

Preschool

Modern/Mainstream: "Happy" by Pharrell Williams

How to Use: Play this upbeat song to energize the children. The teacher can say, "Let's line up with a big smile! Clap your hands if you're happy!"

Classical: "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" by Mozart

How to Use: Use this classical piece to add a touch of elegance. The teacher can say, "Let's line up quietly and gracefully, just like this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "The Line Up Song" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this song, specifically designed for lining up. The teacher can sing along and guide the children, saying, "Let's line up together and get ready for our next activity!"

Line Up Chant: I'm Ready for the Hall Chant



Using this chant helps create a structured and orderly transition, making lining up a fun and engaging activity for the children. The chart below explains how to teach and use the chant

Introduction

The teacher can introduce the chant by saying, "Let's get ready to line up with our special chant!"

Demonstration

The teacher can demonstrate the chant, showing the correct posture and actions. For example, standing straight, hands by the side, and looking straight ahead.

Practice

Encourage the children to practice the chant together. The teacher can lead by saying each line and having the children repeat it.

Repetition

Use the chant consistently every time the children need to line up. This helps reinforce the routine and makes it familiar.

Positive Reinforcement

Praise the children for following the chant correctly. The teacher can say, "Great job, everyone! You're all ready for the hall!"

Teacher

The teacher leads the chant, demonstrating the actions and maintaining a positive and encouraging tone. They can also use gestures to show the correct posture and eye direction.

Children

The children follow along, repeating the chant and mimicking the teacher's actions. They stand straight, keep their hands by their sides, and look straight ahead, preparing to move to the next activity.

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" by Super Simple Songs

How to Use: Play this interactive song to make lining up fun. The teacher can lead the children in the actions, saying, "Let's touch our heads, shoulders, knees, and toes as we line up!"

Classical: "Minuet in G" by Beethoven

How to Use: Use this classical piece to add a touch of elegance. The teacher can say, "Let's line up quietly and gracefully, just like this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "Ring Around the Rosie" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this classic song to make lining up fun. The teacher can sing along and guide the children, saying, "Let's line up together and get ready for our next activity!"

Infants

These songs can help make the lining-up process engaging and enjoyable for infants, regardless of their mobility, ensuring a smooth and positive transition.

Modern/Mainstream: "Baby Shark" by Pinkfong

How to Use: Play this catchy and familiar song to capture the infants' attention. The teacher can sing along and gently guide or carry the infants, saying, "Let's line up like baby sharks! Doo doo doo doo doo doo!"

Classical: "The Swan" from Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saëns

How to Use: Use this soothing classical piece to create a calm atmosphere. The gentle melody can help infants feel relaxed as they are guided or carried to line up. The teacher can say, "Let's move gracefully like swans to line up."

Children's Songs: "The Wheels on the Bus" by Super Simple Songs

How to Use: Play this interactive song to make lining up fun. The teacher can sing along and encourage infants to crawl, walk, or be carried while mimicking the actions of the song, saying, "Let's line up and sing about the bus**!"**

Washing Hands

Introduction: Using music when washing hands can make this essential routine more engaging and enjoyable. Music provides a fun and interactive way to teach proper handwashing techniques, helping children remember the steps more easily. An upbeat and catchy song can capture their attention and motivate them to wash their hands thoroughly. Additionally, music can turn a potentially mundane task into a playful activity, reducing resistance and making handwashing a positive experience. Incorporating music also helps establish a consistent routine, making it easier for children to understand when and how to wash their hands. Overall, using music when washing hands promotes good hygiene practices in a fun and memorable way, ensuring that children stay healthy and happy.

Preschool

Modern/Mainstream: "Car Wash" by Rose Royce

How to Use: Play this song to make handwashing fun. Using the song for washing hands can make this routine task fun and engaging for preschoolers.

Classical: "Water Music" by Handel

How to Use: Use this classical piece to create a soothing environment. The teacher can say, "Let's wash our hands gently, just like the flowing water in this music."

Children's Songs: "Wash Your Hands" by The Wiggles

How to Use: Play this fun and educational song. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to follow the handwashing steps, saying, "Let's wash our hands and stay healthy!"

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "Wash Your Hands Dance" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this song to make handwashing fun. The teacher can sing along and demonstrate proper handwashing techniques, saying, "Let's wash our hands and get rid of those germs!"

Classical: "Ode to Joy" by Beethoven

How to Use: Use this uplifting classical piece to create a positive and energetic environment. The joyful melody can help toddlers feel motivated and happy while washing their hands. The teacher can say, "Let's wash our hands joyfully, just like this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "Wash Your Hands" by The Wiggles

How to Use: Play this fun and educational song. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to follow the handwashing steps, saying, "Let's wash our hands and stay healthy!"

Infants

Modern/Mainstream: "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong

How to Use: Play this soothing and familiar song while washing infants' hands. The gentle melody can help create a calm and comforting atmosphere. The caregiver can softly sing along, saying, "Let's wash our hands and enjoy this wonderful world!"

Classical: "Minuet in G" by Beethoven

How to Use: Use this gentle classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The soothing melody can help infants feel relaxed during handwashing. The caregiver can say, "Let's wash our hands gently, just like this beautiful music." You can find the song here.

Children's Songs: "Wash Your Hands | Original Kids Song from Treetop Family | Super Simple Songs"

How to Use: Play this fun and educational song to make handwashing engaging. The caregiver can sing along and encourage the infants to enjoy the process, saying, "Let's wash our hands and stay healthy!" You can find the song here.

Waiting for Lunch

Using music when waiting for lunch can create a calm and enjoyable atmosphere during this transitional period. Music helps to keep children engaged and occupied, reducing restlessness and impatience as they wait. A soothing or cheerful song can set a positive tone, making the wait feel shorter and more pleasant. Additionally, music can provide a sense of routine and structure, helping children understand that lunchtime is approaching. It can also be an opportunity for children to relax and unwind before eating, promoting a smoother transition to mealtime. Overall, incorporating music when waiting for lunch fosters a peaceful and happy environment, making the wait more enjoyable for both the children and the teacher.

Preschool

Modern/Mainstream: "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles

How to Use: Play this song to create a cheerful atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Lunch is almost here! Let's enjoy this sunny song while we wait."

Classical: "Clair de Lune" by Debussy

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The teacher can say, "Let's listen to this beautiful music and relax while we wait for lunch."

Children's Songs: "Lunch Time Song" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this song to signal lunchtime. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to get ready for lunch, saying, "It's lunchtime! Let's get ready to eat!"

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "You Are My Sunshine" by Johnny Cash

How to Use: Play this song to create a cheerful atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Lunch is almost here! Let's enjoy this sunny song while we wait."

Classical: "Gymnopédie No. 1" by Erik Satie

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The teacher can say, "Let's listen to this beautiful music and relax while we wait for lunch."

Children's Songs: "Lunch Time Song" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this song to signal lunchtime. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to get ready for lunch, saying, "It's lunchtime! Let's get ready to eat!"

Infants

Modern/Mainstream: "You Are My Sunshine" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this cheerful and welcoming song to create a positive atmosphere while waiting for lunch. The upbeat tune can capture infants' attention and make them feel happy. The caregiver can sing along, saying, "Lunch is almost here! Let's enjoy this sunny song while we wait."

Classical: "Prelude in C Major" by Bach

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The gentle and soothing melody can help infants feel relaxed and calm while waiting for lunch. The caregiver can say, "Let's listen to this beautiful music and relax while we wait for our lunch."

Children's Songs: "The More We Get Together" by Super Simple Songs

How to Use: Play this cheerful and engaging song to create a positive atmosphere while waiting for lunch. The upbeat tune can capture infants' attention and make them feel happy. The caregiver can sing along, saying, "Lunch is almost here! Let's enjoy this fun song while we wait."

Getting Jackets or Winter Clothes On:

Using music when getting jackets or winter clothes on for preschoolers can make this routine task more enjoyable and efficient. Music provides a fun and engaging way to signal that it's time to get dressed, helping children understand and respond quickly to the transition. An upbeat and lively song can motivate them to put on their jackets and winter clothes with enthusiasm. Additionally, music can help maintain order and focus, as children are more likely to follow instructions when they are set to a fun tune. Incorporating music into this routine also adds an element of playfulness, turning a potentially tedious activity into a positive experience. Overall, using music when getting jackets or winter clothes on fosters a sense of rhythm and cooperation, making the transition smoother and more enjoyable for both the children and the teacher.

Preschool

Modern/Mainstream: "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" by Dean Martin.

- On rainy days, try “Singing in the Rain” by Gene Kelly.
- On sunny days, use **"**Lovely Day" by Bill Withers

How to Use: Play these songs to make getting dressed fun. The teacher can say, "Time to bundle up! Sing along while you put on your jackets."

Classical: "Winter" from Vivaldi's The Four Seasons

Other options: Use "Spring," "Summer," or "Autumn" from Vivaldi's The Four Seasons

How to Use: Use this classical piece to create a seasonal atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Let's get ready for winter with this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" (with a twist)

How to Use: Adapt this song by adding verses like "Jacket, shoes, hat, and gloves," making it fun while getting dressed for the outside. The teacher can sing along and guide the children, saying, "Let's put on our jackets and get ready for the day!"

"Hokey Pokey" (Outdoor Version)

How to Use: Modify the classic "Hokey Pokey" to fit outdoor clothing by adding lines like "You put your jacket on, you take your

jacket off..." for a fun and interactive way to get dressed. The teacher can sing along and guide the children, saying, "Let's do the Hokey Pokey and get ready for the day!"

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "Let's Go Outside" by The Okee Dokee Brothers

How to Use: Play this cheerful song to make getting dressed fun. The teacher can say, "Let's get ready to go outside! Sing along while you put on your jackets."

On rainy days: "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" by B.J. Thomas

How to Use: Play this song to make getting dressed fun on rainy days. The teacher can say, "Let's get ready for the rain! Sing along while you put on your jackets."

Classical: "Pavane" by Gabriel Fauré

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The soothing melody can help toddlers feel relaxed while getting dressed. The teacher can say, "Let's get ready with this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "Put Your Jacket On" by The Laurie Berkner Band

How to Use: Play this fun and engaging song to make getting dressed enjoyable. The teacher can sing along and guide the toddlers, saying, "Let's put on our jackets and get ready for the day!"

Infants

Modern/Mainstream: "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles

How to Use: Play this cheerful song to create a positive atmosphere while getting dressed. The gentle melody can help infants feel happy and relaxed. The caregiver can softly sing along, saying, "Let's get ready for the day with this sunny song!"

Classical: "Canon in D" by Pachelbel

How to Use: Use this calming classical piece to create a peaceful environment. The soothing melody can help infants feel relaxed while getting dressed. The caregiver can say, "Let's get ready with this beautiful music."

Children's Songs: "Getting Dressed Song" by The Kiboomers

How to Use: Play this fun and engaging song to make getting dressed enjoyable. The caregiver can sing along and encourage the infants to enjoy the process, saying, "Let's put on our jackets and get ready for the day!"

Going Home

Music provides a clear auditory cue that signals it's time to transition from school to home, helping children understand and respond quickly to the change. A soothing and calming song can help them wind down and prepare for the transition, making the process less hectic and more peaceful. Additionally, music can foster a sense of closure and routine, helping children feel secure and ready to leave. Incorporating music at going-home time also adds an element of joy and reflection, allowing children to end their day on a positive note. Overall, using music when going home promotes a calm and organized environment, making the transition smoother and more enjoyable for both the children and the caregiver.

Preschoolers

Modern/Mainstream: "Goodbye" by The Beatles

How to Use**:** Play this song to end the day on a positive note. The teacher can say, "It's time to go home! Sing along and say goodbye to your friends."

Classical: "Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saëns

How to Use: Use this lively and imaginative piece to create a fun and engaging atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Let's listen to the animals as we get ready to go home!"

Children's Songs: "Goodbye Song" by The Learning Station

How to Use: Play this song to signal the end of the day. The teacher can sing along and encourage the children to say goodbye, saying, "It's time to go home! Let's say goodbye to our friends!"

Toddlers

Modern/Mainstream: "Happy" by Pharrell Williams

How to Use: Play this upbeat song to create a joyful atmosphere. The teacher can say, "Let's get ready to go home with a smile!"

Classical: "Goodbye Song" from *The Magic Flute* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

How to Use: Use this gentle piece to create a calm and soothing environment. The teacher can say, "Let's listen to this beautiful music as we get ready to go home."

Children's Songs: "Goodbye Song" by The Laurie Berkner Band

How to Use: Play this song to signal the end of the day. The teacher can sing along and encourage the toddlers to say goodbye, saying, "It's time to go home! Let's say goodbye to our friends!"

Infants

Modern/Mainstream: "You Are My Sunshine" by Elizabeth Mitchell

How to Use: Play this gentle song to create a comforting atmosphere. The caregiver can say, "It's time to go home! Let's listen to this sweet song."

Classical: "The Swan" from *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns

How to Use: Use this soothing piece to create a peaceful environment. The caregiver can say, "Let's listen to this calming music as we get ready to go home."

Children's Songs: "Goodbye, Goodbye" by Super Simple Songs

How to Use: Play this familiar song to signal the end of the day. The caregiver can sing along and encourage the infants to relax, saying, "It's time to go home! Let's listen to this gentle song."

Conclusion

Effective music and movement transitions are essential in early childhood education, as they help create a structured and engaging learning environment. By incorporating developmentally appropriate strategies tailored to preschoolers, toddlers, and infants, educators can ensure that transitions are smooth, fun, and educational. These transitions not only facilitate the flow of daily activities but also connect children to broader social studies themes such as community roles, cultural diversity, and environmental exploration. Using music throughout the day for various routines, such as arriving at school, lining up, washing hands, waiting for lunch, getting jackets on, and going home, enhances children's learning experiences and promotes a positive and joyful classroom atmosphere. Ultimately, these music and movement transitions foster a sense of rhythm, cooperation, and curiosity, helping children understand their place in the world and preparing them for a lifetime of learning.

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6.4: Music Experiences and the WMELS Framework

Introduction

In Chapters 4 and 5, we explored how to incorporate social studies and art into early childhood learning, using the WMELS framework to support developmental domains such as physical development, social-emotional growth, language, and cognitive skills. In Chapter 4, we looked at how to design social studies lessons that are engaging and relevant for young children, emphasizing the exploration of community and societal roles. In Chapter 5, we discussed art and its role in fostering creativity, fine motor skills, and self-expression.

Now, in this chapter, we will take a similar approach by integrating music and movement with a social studies theme, continuing to align with the WMELS framework. This section focuses on using music, rhythm, and movement as tools to explore social studies topics such as community, cooperation, and identity. Music and movement are powerful tools to foster understanding and engagement with developmentally appropriate concepts.

Key Elements of WMELS Framework in Music and Movement



Figure 6.4.1: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Domains

Physical Development Music and movement activities enhance gross motor skills, coordination, and body awareness. In these activities, children practice actions like dancing, marching, clapping, and using different body parts, which helps them improve their motor coordination and physical health.

Example of Teacher Implementation: A teacher can incorporate "freeze dance" where children move freely to music and freeze when the music stops. This helps develop body control and coordination while allowing children to practice listening skills as they respond to auditory cues.

Social and Emotional Development Music can convey emotions and foster a sense of belonging and teamwork during group activities. Through group songs or collaborative dance activities, children practice social skills such as cooperation, turn-taking, and expressing emotions through their movements.

Example of Teacher Implementation: During a "community helpers" dance, children take turns performing movements that represent different community roles (e.g., pretending to "doctor" or "firefighter"). Afterward, the teacher can encourage discussion about how the characters felt during the activity, promoting emotional literacy by helping children recognize and label their emotions.

Cognitive Development Movement can aid in learning rhythms, patterns, and basic mathematical concepts such as counting beats or steps. As children move to the rhythm of the music, they also reinforce spatial awareness, sequencing, and pattern recognition.

Example of Teacher Implementation: A teacher can lead children in a "counting steps dance" where they march or clap while counting along to the rhythm of a song. For example, they might clap four times, then take four steps forward, reinforcing the concept of numbers and sequences while engaging them in physical activity.

Language Development Singing and rhythm help with language acquisition by introducing new vocabulary and encouraging verbal expression. Songs, chants, and rhymes help develop listening skills, expand vocabulary, and encourage children to practice enunciating words and sentences.

Example of Teacher Implementation: A teacher could use a song about community helpers where the children sing together, emphasizing vocabulary words like "firefighter," "doctor," and "teacher." As the children sing, they can also act out the corresponding roles, reinforcing both the language and concept being learned.

Approaches to Learning Music and movement encourage curiosity, creativity, persistence, and initiative. Children engage their imaginations and respond to the environment in flexible ways, which fosters a love of learning and exploration.

Example of Teacher Implementation: A teacher might introduce a creative movement activity, asking children to act out the motions of community helpers they have learned about (e.g., pretending to carry a big bag of groceries as a shopper). This allows children to engage their creativity and problem-solving skills while expressing their understanding through movement.

Sample Music and Movement Activity with Social Studies Focus

Community Helpers Music and Movement Learning Experience

Topic

Community Helpers (Social Studies Focus)

Activity

Children sing a song about different community helpers, such as firefighters, doctors, and teachers. The song incorporates movements (e.g., mimicking actions like putting out fires or treating patients). Children can dance and act out the roles of community helpers while learning about their importance in society.

Song

"We All Help in Our Town" (Tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

Lyrics

Verse #1
The helpers in our town say, "I'll help you!"
"I'll help you, I'll help you!"
The helpers in our town say, "I'll help you!"
We work together in our town.

Verse #2
The firefighters in our town go, "Spray, spray, spray!"
"Spray, spray, spray! Spray, spray, spray!"
The firefighters in our town go, "Spray, spray, spray!"
We'll put the fire out.

Think of additional verses for other community helpers

Activity Steps

1. **Introduction:** Start by singing the song, encouraging children to perform movements that mimic the actions of community helpers (e.g., "spray, spray, spray the fire").

   WMELS Framework Alignment: This helps children with physical development as they use gross motor movements, and it aligns with social-emotional development by fostering teamwork and cooperation.

2. **Exploration:** As children move to the beat, discuss the roles of various community helpers and their contributions.

   WMELS Framework Alignment: This reinforces cognitive development, as children make connections between the roles of community helpers and their own experiences in the community.

3. **Reflection:** After the activity, have children sit down and share what they learned about the community helpers they acted out.

   WMELS Framework Alignment: Reflecting promotes language development as children verbalize their thoughts and express their understanding of the concept.

Assessment

Physical Development: Observe children's ability to participate in movement (e.g., do they perform the actions accurately, such as pretending to put out a fire or treating a patient?).

Cognitive Development: Evaluate children's understanding of the roles of community helpers by asking them to name a community helper and describe their role.

Language Development: Evaluate their use of language as they describe the movements and the helpers (e.g., "I'm a firefighter, and I'm putting out the fire!").

Family Engagement Ideas

Music and Movement at Home

Encourage families to participate in music and movement activities at home.

- Singing songs about community helpers and acting out their roles.
- Turning on the music and moving with their children.
- Incorporate dance and movement into everyday routines.
- Tap and clap to the rhythm of songs and encourage children to do the same.
- Share songs, music, and dance traditions or movement games from their homes.
- Be open-minded and encouraging about children's spontaneous musical performances.

Music and Movement in the Community

- Community Helper Visits: Invite community helpers to visit the classroom and share their experiences with the children.
- Notice and talk about sounds heard on community outings or trips.
- Notice and talk about songs and music heard at home and in the community.
- Bring the child to community concerts, family-child music classes, community dance performances, and movement programs.

Family Music Night: Organize a family music night where children can perform songs and dances they have learned, involving parents and caregivers in the activities.

Incorporating the WMELS Framework in Practice

Understanding WMELS Domains

When planning music and movement activities, always keep the five developmental domains of WMELS in mind.



Figure 6.4.2: WMELS Domains

- **Physical Development:** Focus on activities that help children develop motor coordination and body awareness (e.g., dancing, marching, clapping).
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Foster a sense of belonging, empathy, and social cooperation (e.g., acting out roles together, sharing experiences).
- **Language Development:** Promote verbal expression and vocabulary development through songs, chants, and discussions (e.g., using new words like "firefighter" or "doctor").
- **Cognitive Development:** Engage children in activities that promote problem-solving, sequencing, and basic math concepts (e.g., counting beats or steps).
- **Approaches to Learning:** Encourage creativity, curiosity, and persistence by allowing children to explore and respond to music and movement in an open-ended, imaginative way.

Creating a Holistic Learning Experience

The WMELS framework encourages teachers to consider all domains when planning activities. For instance, when leading a music and movement activity:

- Observe children as they engage in the movement, noting how they respond physically, socially, and emotionally.
- Reflect on how the activity addresses the learning objectives for each domain. Did children practice fine motor skills (physical development)? Did they work together (social-emotional development)? Did they use new vocabulary (language development)?
- Adapt activities as necessary to meet the developmental needs of each child, ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging.

By aligning music, movement, and social studies with the WMELS framework, you create rich, developmentally appropriate experiences that support the holistic development of young children. Each chapter builds on the previous one, helping to weave together the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language domains into an integrated, cohesive learning environment.

Conclusion

Incorporating the WMELS framework into music and movement activities provides a comprehensive approach to early childhood education. By focusing on physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and learning approaches, educators can create engaging and meaningful experiences that support children's overall development. This chapter, along with the previous ones, demonstrates how integrating various subjects with the WMELS framework can foster a well-rounded, developmentally appropriate learning environment for young children.

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6.5: Planning Music Experiences Using the Teaching Cycle

Introduction

In previous chapters, we explored how to create meaningful, relevant, and appropriately challenging lessons using the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) Teaching Cycle. In this chapter, we will apply a similar approach to planning music experiences, ensuring that the teaching cycle is reflected in our lesson planning and aligns with the children's developmental progress.

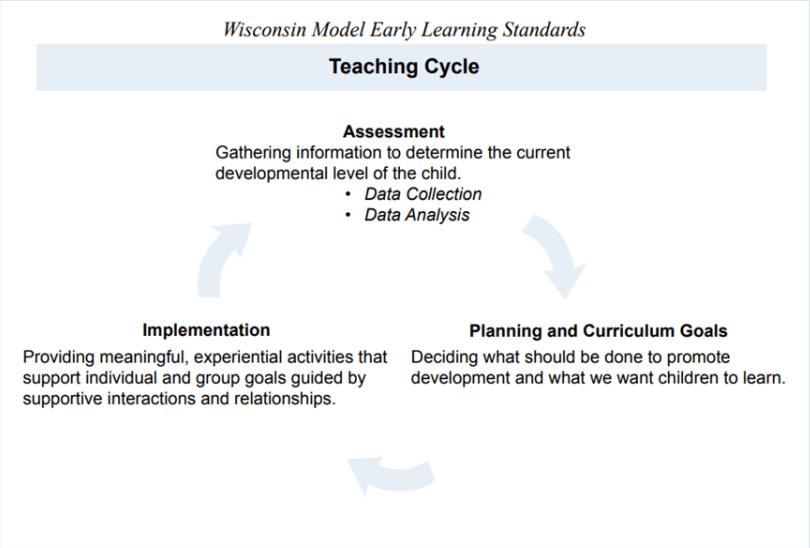


Figure 6.5.1: Teaching Cycle

WMELS Teaching Cycle Overview:

1. **Observation (Assessment in WMELS Teaching Cycle)**
   - **Purpose:** Understand the children's current skills, interests, and developmental progress through their interactions with music and musical activities.
   - **Key Action:** Teachers observe children's engagement with different musical instruments, songs, and rhythms.
   - **Example:** Ms. Lara observes children during music time, noting their preferences for certain instruments and types of music.
2. **Documentation**
   - **Purpose:** Capture evidence of children's musical expressions, behaviors, and learning.
   - **Key Action:** Teachers document the children's musical activities and related behaviors through photos, written notes, and recordings.
   - **Example:** Ms. Lara takes photographs of children playing instruments and writes down observations about their preferences and engagement.
3. **Reflection & Planning (Planning & Curriculum Goals in WMELS)**
   - **Purpose:** Reflect on the observations and plan the next steps in children's musical exploration.
   - **Key Action:** Teachers analyze the documentation to design future music activities that will further develop their musical skills and creativity.
   - **Example:** Ms. Lara plans a music activity that encourages children to experiment with different rhythms and melodies.
4. **Implementation (Implementation in WMELS)**
   - **Purpose:** Put the planned music experiences into action.
   - **Key Action:** Teachers facilitate the activity by providing the necessary musical instruments and guiding children through the process.
   - **Example:** Ms. Lara sets up a music station with various instruments, encouraging children to experiment with creating

their own rhythms and melodies.

5. **Review and Adjust**
    - **Purpose:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the music activity and use children's feedback to adjust future lessons and activities.
    - **Key Action:** Teachers review the children's responses to the activity and make adjustments for future plans.
    - **Example:** Ms. Lara reflects on the children's engagement and plans the next lesson to further explore different musical genres and instruments.

Preschool Music Vignette: Exploring Rhythms and Melodies

- **Observation:** Ms. Lara observes children during music time, noting their preferences for certain instruments and types of music.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lara captures photographs and writes detailed notes on children's musical activities.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lara plans a music activity focused on experimenting with different rhythms and melodies.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lara introduces the activity, guiding children through creating their own music.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lara reflects on the children's engagement and plans future lessons based on their interests.

Toddler Music Vignette: Exploring Sounds and Movement

- **Observation:** Ms. Emily notices toddlers using their bodies to explore sounds and movement during music time.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Emily documents the toddlers' actions by taking photos and writing down their interactions with music.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Emily plans a hands-on music activity that encourages sensory exploration through sound and movement.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Emily sets up a music station with various instruments and encourages toddlers to explore sounds and movement.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Emily reflects on the toddlers' engagement and plans future activities to support their musical development.

Infant Music Vignette: Exploring Musical Toys and Sounds

- **Observation:** Ms. Lily observes infants drawn to musical toys and sounds during playtime.
- **Documentation:** Ms. Lily takes photos and notes the infants' reactions to the musical toys and sounds.
- **Reflection & Planning:** Ms. Lily plans an activity introducing simple musical toys and sounds to support early musical exploration.
- **Implementation:** Ms. Lily sets up a play area with musical toys and guides infants through the activity.
- **Review and Adjust:** Ms. Lily reflects on the infants' responses and plans future activities to deepen their musical recognition.

Conclusion

The WMELS Teaching Cycle offers a structured approach to planning music and movement experiences that are responsive to children's developmental needs and interests. By following the cycle of observation, documentation, reflection, planning, implementation, and review, teachers can create music activities that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate. This cyclical process ensures that music and movement experiences are continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of children, fostering creativity, physical development, and self-expression.

Through the vignettes provided, we see practical examples of how the WMELS Teaching Cycle can be applied to various age groups, from infants to preschoolers. Each vignette demonstrates the importance of observing children's interests, documenting their behaviors, reflecting on their developmental progress, planning meaningful music and movement activities, implementing those activities, and reviewing their effectiveness. By adhering to this cycle, teachers can ensure that their music lessons are not only educational but also tailored to the unique needs and interests of each child.

Music and movement activities are particularly beneficial for children's physical development, coordination, and rhythm. They provide opportunities for children to express themselves through dance, explore different sounds and instruments, and develop a sense of timing and rhythm. These activities also support social-emotional development by encouraging cooperation, turn-taking, and group participation.

In summary, the WMELS Teaching Cycle is a valuable tool for educators, helping them to create music and movement experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriately challenging. By continuously observing, documenting, reflecting, planning, implementing, and reviewing, teachers can support children's growth and development in a holistic and responsive manner, allowing their creativity and physical skills to flourish.

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- 11.8: Supporting Dance by Jennifer Paris, Kristin Beeve, and Clint Springer has no license indicated.

7: INTERDISCIPLINARY UNIT FOR SSAMM

7.1: Sequential Learning Experiences
7.2: Address All Developmental Domains
7.3: Experiences from social studies, art, movement, and music
7.4: Requirements for Learning

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7.1: Sequential Learning Experiences

Integrate SSAMM learning experiences into an interdisciplinary unit

Introduction

This document outlines how to integrate Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement (SSAMM) learning experiences into an interdisciplinary unit.

Common Unit Themes

It is common for many programs to integrate many aspects of learning with the use of “themes” as a way to weave learning together for children. For some learners, the connection of several learning experiences all related to a common concept can support deeper learning. The most successful themes are those that emerge out of the children’s interests (often called “**emergent curriculum**”). Common themes include:

- My family
- Friendship and caring
- Community Helpers
- Animals
- Activities (camping, ...)
- Transportation
- Locations (oceans, mountains, farms,...)

Social Studies Themes for Young Children

For young children, social studies themes can be engaging and educational through various activities. **Cultural Celebrations** can be explored by creating simple crafts representing different cultural festivals, listening to music from various cultures, and reading stories about different traditions. **Historical Figures** can be introduced through role-playing using costumes, creating simple art projects like portraits, and reading age-appropriate biographies. **Geography** can be made fun by exploring maps and globes, creating dioramas of different regions, and engaging in sensory activities related to different environments, such as sand for deserts and water for oceans. **Government and Citizenship** can be taught through playing games that involve taking turns and sharing, discussing basic rules and responsibilities, and participating in community projects like planting a garden. Lastly, **Economics** can be introduced by setting up a play store with pretend money, discussing the concept of trade through toy exchanges, and exploring resources through activities like sorting and counting.

Pause to Reflect

What other themes can you think of?

What themes can you think of that will allow you to present social studies, art, and music topics to the children to help them learn about themselves and others?

What themes from the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) Framework might you use to help children learn social studies concepts?

Curriculum Web

When planning a theme-based unit, a teacher begins by selecting a theme that resonates with the children's interests, such as 'Community Helpers' or 'Families.' The teacher then brainstorms and organizes ideas using a curriculum web, which helps visualize connections between different activities.

For example, the teacher might plan stories and fingerplays related to the themes, such as reading books about different family structures or community helper roles, and singing songs about family members or community helpers. Transitions between activities can be smooth and engaging, using thematic cues like pretending to drive a car to visit family members or mimicking the actions of community helpers like firefighters or doctors. Art projects can include drawing or crafting representations of the themes, such as creating family portraits, making family trees, or designing badges for community helpers. Music and movement activities can involve dancing to songs about families or community helpers, and acting out roles like parents, children, firefighters, or doctors through dramatic play. By integrating these diverse activities, the teacher creates a rich, interdisciplinary learning experience that supports the children's development across multiple domains.

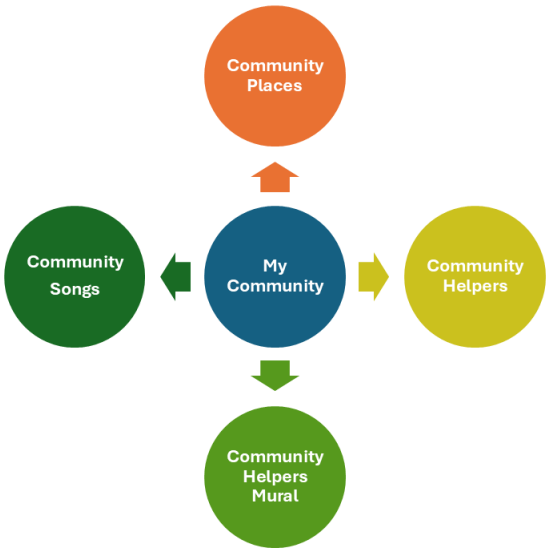
Often, when planning a theme, teachers will use the concept of a curriculum “web” to begin to plan their ideas. Like a list, but in a different format, a web allows teachers to brainstorm related ideas and then choose the ones that make the most sense to more thoroughly plan for. This process uses both a teacher’s divergent and convergent thinking skills.

A basic web diagram will look like this:



Figure 7.1.1: Basic web diagram

Here is a sample of a curriculum web for a community theme using the web format. Can you think of activities to add?



Pause to Reflect

What advantages can you find in creating a planning web?

How might you incorporate observations about the children into helping you with your web ideas?

Interdisciplinary SSAMM Units

When planning units, ensure the following criteria are met:

- **Multiple sequential learning experiences**
- **Address all developmental domains**
- **Include social studies, art, music, and movement experiences**
- **Meet all the requirements for learning experience plans**

Curriculum Web for SSAMM

Below are webs outlining an interdisciplinary SSAMM unit that combines Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement Activities.

When planning, teachers should always take into account the interests and developmental level of the children. For example, a preschool teacher could plan a Name theme at the beginning of the year so children can learn the names of their classmates and how special and important our names are to us. Another example would be an infant teacher noticing the infants showing excitement or curiosity when looking at pictures of their family members on the classroom wall, so he plans a family unit. Still another example would be a toddler teacher planning a community helper theme after noticing the children were pretending to put out fires with a pretend hose.

Children learn best when the activities in the classroom are integrated, meaning all the activities the teacher plans are related to the same topic.

First, let's explore the "Gentle Hands" theme for Infants/Toddlers.

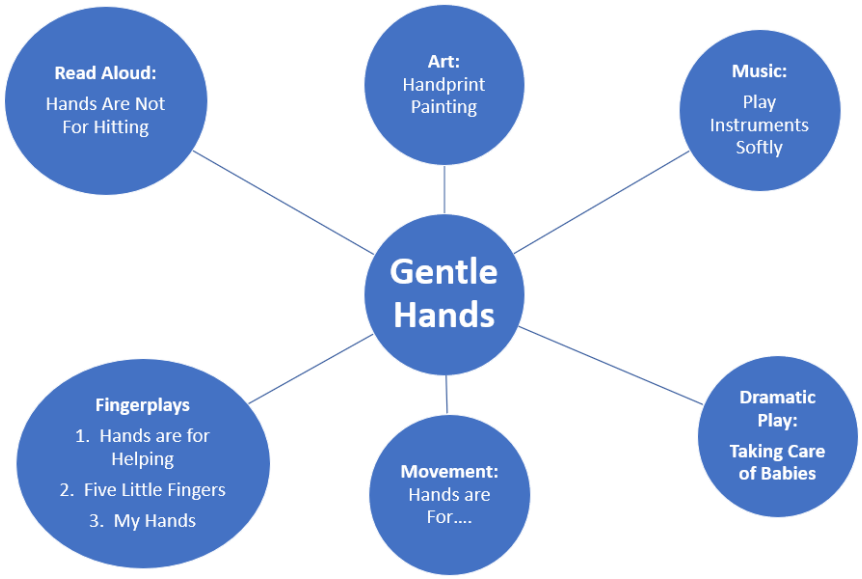


Figure 7.1.3: Gently Hands Theme.

1. Start with a theme. In the example, the theme is Gentle Hands.
2. Determine the Read Aloud Story for planning the unit around: Hands Are Not for Hitting by Martine Agassi.

3. Determine the Art Activity related to the story/theme.
4. Determine the Music Activity related to the story/theme.
5. Determine the Fingerplays related to the story/theme.
6. Determine the Dramatic Play Activity related to the story/theme.
7. Determine the Movement Activity related to the story/theme.

Now let's look at how you could plan activities for a NAMES theme.

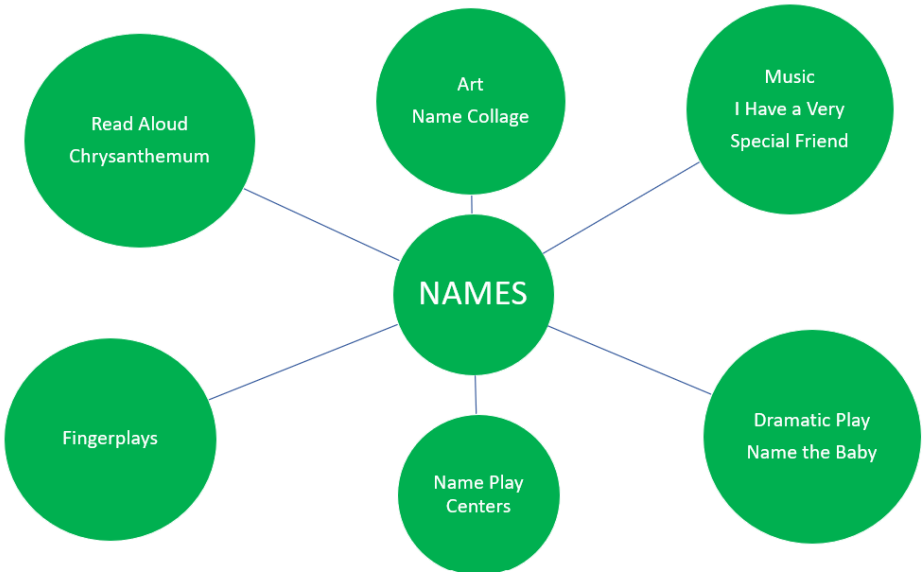


Figure 7.1.4: Ideas for a NAMES Theme

1. Start with a theme. In the example, the theme is NAMES.
2. Determine the Read Aloud Story for planning the unit around: Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
3. Determine the Art Activity related to the story/theme.
4. Determine the Music Activity related to the story/theme.
5. Determine the Fingerplays related to the story/theme.
6. Determine the Dramatic Play Activity related to the story/theme.
7. Determine the Movement Activity related to the story/theme.

As you can see, all of the activities shown in the GENTLE HANDS web and the NAMES web are examples of multiple sequential learning experiences.

Conclusion

Sequential learning experiences, organized around themes and curriculum webs, are essential for creating engaging and effective interdisciplinary units for young children.

1. **Theme-Based Learning**:
    - Themes like "My Family" and "Community Helpers" integrate various activities, making learning more meaningful.
    - These themes often come from children's interests, supporting deeper engagement.
2. **Curriculum Webs**:
    - Curriculum webs help teachers plan and connect activities around a central theme.
    - They visualize how different activities, like stories and art projects, relate to each other, ensuring a cohesive learning plan.

By using theme-based learning and curriculum webs, educators can create rich, interconnected learning experiences that build

on each other, making the learning journey cohesive and engaging for children.

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7.2: Address All Developmental Domains

Integrate SSAMM learning experiences into an interdisciplinary unit

Domains of Learning

Development and **learning** are two integrated concepts that we, as educators, strive to promote. As children engage in **learning** new concepts and skills, they simultaneously foster their **development**. Our overarching goal is to nurture the development of the **whole child,** encompassing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual domains, by providing learning experiences tailored to their interests and abilities. This approach is known as **intentional teaching**.

Intentional teaching involves creating purposeful and meaningful learning opportunities that align with children's natural curiosities and developmental stages. By observing and understanding each child's unique interests and abilities, educators can design activities that not only captivate their attention but also promote holistic growth.

Although children learn in an integrated manner, blending all areas of development together, these domains are often delineated for planning purposes. This segmentation helps educators ensure that each aspect of development is addressed comprehensively. However, it is crucial to recognize that **learning** is most effective when it is **integrated** and **connective**. When children can see the connections between different areas of knowledge and skills, they are more likely to internalize and apply what they have learned in various contexts.

For instance, a simple activity like storytelling can simultaneously enhance language skills, foster social-emotional development, and stimulate cognitive growth. By discussing the emotions of characters, children learn to express and manage their own feelings. By asking questions about the plot, they develop critical thinking skills. And by engaging in the narrative, they expand their vocabulary and comprehension.

In summary, the integration of **development** and **learning** is fundamental to intentional teaching. By creating learning experiences that are interconnected and reflective of children's interests, educators can support the comprehensive development of the whole child, ensuring that each child grows in a balanced and holistic manner.

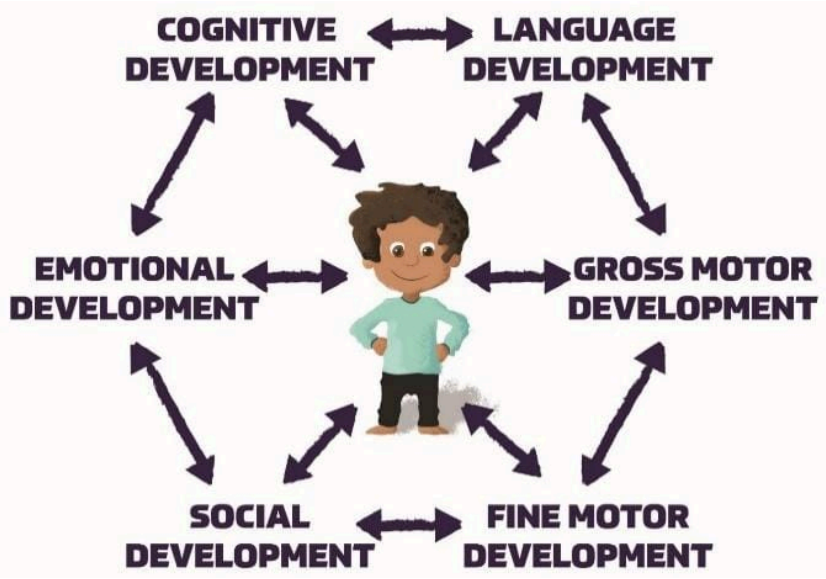


Figure 7.2.1: All areas of development affect and are affected by each other [69]

Toddler Vignette: Teaching Kindness and Gently Hands Using "Hands are Not for Hitting"

Vignette: Teaching Kindness and Gentle Hands Using "Hands Are Not for Hitting"

Introduction

This unit is designed for toddlers to teach kindness and the concept of gentle hands using the book "Hands Are Not for Hitting" by Martine Agassi. The unit addresses all developmental domains: cognitive, physical, social-emotional, language, and approaches to learning.

Objectives

- **Cognitive**: Understand the concept of kindness and gentle hands.
- **Physical**: Develop fine motor skills through activities.
- **Social-Emotional**: Recognize and express emotions appropriately.
- **Language**: Enhance vocabulary related to emotions and actions.
- **Approaches to Learning**: Foster active, collaborative, reflective, play-based, and sensory learning.

Materials

- "Hands Are Not for Hitting" book
- Soft, plush toys or dolls
- Large soft cushions or stuffed animals
- Soft, non-toxic hand lotion or baby wipes (optional)
- Art supplies (washable paint, paper)
- Soft instruments (maracas, tambourines, scarves)
- Emotion cards

Story: A Day in the Classroom

Morning Circle Time

The day begins with the children gathering in a cozy circle on the soft carpet. Ms. Emily, their teacher, holds up the book "Hands Are Not for Hitting" and smiles warmly at the eager faces around her. She begins to read aloud, her voice gentle and engaging. The children listen attentively, their eyes wide with curiosity.

As Ms. Emily reads, she pauses to ask questions. "What do you do with your hands?" she asks. Little hands shoot up in the air, and the children excitedly share their answers. "I use my hands to draw!" says one child. "I hug my mommy with my hands," says another. Ms. Emily nods and encourages them to think about how they can use their hands gently.

Gentle Touch Practice

After the story, Ms. Emily brings out a basket filled with soft, plush toys and large cushions. She demonstrates how to gently touch a toy's head and pat a cushion softly. The children watch closely, then eagerly take turns practicing gentle touches. They giggle as they feel the soft textures and learn to be gentle with their hands.

Art Project: Handprint Art

Next, it's time for an art project. Ms. Emily sets up a table with washable paint and large sheets of paper. The children dip their hands in the paint and press them onto the paper, creating colorful handprints. As they work, Ms. Emily talks to them about how their hands can be used for kind actions like helping, hugging, and making art. The children proudly show off their handprint creations, each one a unique expression of their understanding.

Dramatic Play: Caring Hands

In the dramatic play area, Ms. Emily sets up a pretend play scene with soft toys and pretend play items. She models gentle actions like feeding, hugging, and patting the toys. The children eagerly join in, using their hands to care for the toys. They talk about what they are doing, using language to describe their actions and emotions. "I'm feeding the baby," says one child, gently holding a toy bottle. "I'm hugging my teddy bear," says another, wrapping their arms around a plush toy.

Music Activity: Gentle Hands, Gentle Music

Ms. Emily gathers the children for a music activity. She hands out soft instruments like maracas and tambourines, and scarves for gentle movements. She sings a gentle song, and the children follow along, making soft sounds with their instruments and moving gracefully with the scarves. The room fills with the soothing sounds of gentle music, and the children learn to coordinate their movements with the rhythm.

Movement Activity: Hands Are for Clapping and Waving

To wrap up the day, Ms. Emily leads the children in a movement activity. They practice positive hand movements like clapping and waving while singing a simple song. The children laugh and smile as they explore different gentle hand movements, enjoying the group activity and the sense of togetherness.

Assessment

Throughout the day, Ms. Emily observes the children's interactions and use of gentle hands during activities. She asks them to share their thoughts and feelings about what they have learned. The children's drawings from the art project provide insight into their understanding of kind actions.

Conclusion

As the day comes to an end, Ms. Emily gathers the children for a final circle time. She reflects on the day's activities and praises the children for their efforts. The unit has successfully integrated cognitive, physical, social-emotional, language, and approaches to learning to teach toddlers the importance of kindness and gentle hands. Through engaging activities and discussions, the children have learned to express emotions appropriately and use their hands for positive actions.

Pause to Reflect

What type of development and learning is taking place in the vignette above? What domains are the children developing in?

Including All Domains in Unit Plans

You will want to be sure that the activities you have planned for your interdisciplinary unit will foster development in all developmental domains.

See the examples below of how the children might be developing in all domains through the activities in the GENTLE HANDS Unit.



- You will want to be sure the activities in your unit plan are helping the children to develop in all domains.
- Most of the time, children are learning in all domains through one activity.
- You will want to think about each activity to see what domains a child will be developing in, to be sure you have included all domains. See the examples below of some ways children will be developing by participating in activities in the GENTLE HANDS unit.

Health and Physical Domain

- **Children will develop** fine motor skills through art learning experiences.
- **Children will develop** fine motor skills through playing instruments.
- **Children will develop** gross motor skills through clapping and waving.

Social and Emotional Domain

- **Children will develop** social-emotional skills as they take turns using materials.
- **Children will develop** social-emotional skills when they practice using gentle hands.

Language Development and Communication Domain

- **Children will develop** language and communication skills through listening to stories.
- **Children will develop** an understanding of theme-related vocabulary through stories and discussions.
- **Children will develop** beginning-level communication skills when they use gestures and/or words to show gentle hands**.**

Cognition and General Knowledge Domain

- **Children will develop** exploration, discovery, and problem-solving skills when they are exploring and experimenting with the concept of gentle touches, using their hands in a new way to communicate, interact, and solve problems in social interactions.



- **Children will develop** skills in curiosity, engagement, and persistence because they are exploring and engaging with a new way to interact with their peers (gentle touches).
- They are also using their hands in new ways to paint softly and play instruments softly.

Conclusion

The unit described in the document successfully integrates cognitive, physical, social-emotional, language, and approaches to learning to teach toddlers the importance of kindness and gentle hands. Through engaging activities and discussions, the children have learned to express emotions appropriately and use their hands for positive actions. The intentional teaching approach ensures that each child grows in a balanced and holistic manner, fostering development across all domains. By creating interconnected learning experiences that reflect children's interests, educators can support comprehensive development, ensuring that children internalize and apply their learning in various contexts.

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7.3: Experiences from social studies, art, movement, and music

Integrate SSAMM learning experiences into an interdisciplinary unit

Incorporating All SSAMM Content Areas

To create a comprehensive and engaging unit plan, it's essential to include activities from all SSAMM content areas: **Art, Music, Language, and Social Studies**. Integrating multiple domains and content areas into your activities helps children learn better by making connections across different subjects. Below are detailed examples of how to achieve this.

Separate, Unconnected Learning Experiences for Spring

Separate Learning Experiences

Theme: Spring

Story: Spring is Here: A Bear and Mole Story by Will Hillenbrand

Science: Plant Flowers, then take them home once they start to grow

Music: Sing Five Little Speckled Frogs

Art: Paint Pictures of a Duck Holding an Umbrella with Raindrops

Math: Counting Eggs in Nests

While all these activities connect to the theme of Spring, they don't necessarily connect to one another. This approach doesn't allow children to explore the subject in depth and from multiple perspectives.

Interdisciplinary Connected Learning Experiences

Theme: Hands Are Not for Hitting

Story:

- **Fiction**: *Hands Are Not for Hitting* by Martine Agassi

Social Studies:

- Discuss the importance of using hands for helping, hugging, and being gentle with others.
- Role-play scenarios where children practice gentle touches and kind actions.
- Create a classroom agreement on using hands for positive purposes and display it prominently.

Music:

- Sing songs about gentle hands and kind actions. Use soft instruments like maracas, tambourines, or scarves to create gentle music.
- Encourage children to follow movements with their hands, emphasizing gentleness.

Art:

- Children use various art materials to create handprint art, emphasizing positive expressions with their hands.
- Create a collaborative mural where each child adds their handprint and a drawing of a kind action.
- **Movement:**
- Engage in activities that emphasize gentle movements, such as clapping, waving, and touching softly.
- Incorporate simple songs or rhymes that involve gentle hand movements.

- They must show how hands can be used for positive purposes.

This unit incorporates all SSAMM disciplines, allowing children to learn in multiple domains. The activities are interconnected, providing a deeper and more holistic understanding of the theme.

Additional Details for Effective Integration

Planning and Coordination

Ensure that each activity is designed to complement the others. For example, the art project can be displayed during the music session, and the social studies discussion can be referenced during movement activities.

Assessment and Reflection

Include opportunities for children to reflect on their learning experiences. This can be done through group discussions, individual reflections, or creative expressions like drawing or storytelling.

Flexibility and Adaptation

Be prepared to adapt activities based on the children's interests and responses. Flexibility allows for a more personalized and engaging learning experience.

Parental Involvement

Encourage parents to participate in some activities, such as creating handprints. This fosters a connection between home and school learning environments.

Resource Utilization:

Utilize a variety of resources, including books, music recordings, art supplies, and movement props, to enrich the learning experience.

By integrating SSAMM learning experiences into an interdisciplinary unit, you create a cohesive and engaging educational environment that supports children's holistic development.

Conclusion

To conclude, integrating all SSAMM content areas—Art, Music, Language, and Social Studies—into a unit plan creates a rich, interdisciplinary learning experience for children. This approach helps children make connections across different subjects, enhancing their understanding and retention. By integrating SSAMM learning experiences, you create a cohesive and engaging educational environment that supports children's holistic development.

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7.4: Requirements for Learning

The Importance of Planning in Early Childhood Education

Planning is a critical component of effective early childhood education. It ensures that educators are prepared to meet the diverse needs of children, create engaging learning experiences, and foster a supportive and inclusive environment. Here, we will discuss the importance of planning, the types of activities to plan for, what should be included in a unit plan, and the significance of curriculum implementation, evaluation, and reflection.

Importance of Planning

1. **Meeting Developmental Needs**: Planning helps educators tailor activities to the developmental stages and individual needs of children. This ensures that each child can engage meaningfully and benefit from the learning experiences.
2. **Preparation and Flexibility**: By planning ahead, educators can gather necessary materials, set up the environment, and anticipate potential challenges. This preparation allows for flexibility and adaptability as children interact with the planned activities.
3. **Alignment with Standards**: Effective planning ensures that activities align with educational standards and frameworks, such as the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) or Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF).
4. **Holistic Development**: Planning allows educators to integrate various learning domains, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical development, providing a well-rounded educational experience.
5. **Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness**: Thoughtful planning includes materials and activities that reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children, promoting inclusion and respect for diversity.
6. **Family and Community Engagement**: Planning can incorporate opportunities for family and community involvement, enhancing the learning experience and building stronger connections between home and school.

Types of Activities to Plan For

1. **Arrival and Departure**: Planning for smooth transitions at the beginning and end of the day helps children feel secure and sets a positive tone.
2. **Small Group Time**: Activities designed for small groups allow for more individualized attention and support.
3. **Large Group Time**: Whole-class activities foster a sense of community and provide opportunities for social learning.
4. **Centers**: Setting up various learning centers (e.g., art, science, dramatic play) encourages exploration and hands-on learning.
5. **Child-Initiated Play**: Providing time and space for children to choose their activities promotes autonomy and creativity.
6. **Nutrition**: Planning for snack and meal times ensures that these routines are educational and support healthy habits.
7. **Self-Help Skills**: Activities that promote independence, such as handwashing and toileting, are essential for young children's development.
8. **Transitions**: Planning for transitions between activities helps maintain a smooth flow and minimizes disruptions.

Components of a Unit Plan

1. **Developmental Appropriateness**: Ensure activities are suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children. Address individual needs, interests, and learning styles, and provide support for children with disabilities or language delays.
2. **Alignment with Standards and Frameworks**: Align goals with relevant educational standards and frameworks. Ensure learning objectives span multiple domains of development.
3. **Learning Domains and Approaches to Learning**: Include activities that promote cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical development. Foster approaches to learning such as curiosity, persistence, creativity, and initiative.
4. **Content Area Integration**: Integrate various content areas, such as social studies, art, music, and movement, to create interdisciplinary learning experiences.
5. **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices**: Use materials and activities that reflect the children's home cultures and languages. Promote inclusion and respect for diversity, and support dual language learners.
6. **Family and Community Engagement**: Involve families and the community in the learning process through activities such as field trips, community visitors, and take-home extensions.
7. **Classroom Environment and Materials**: Arrange learning areas intentionally and rotate materials to keep the environment

engaging and relevant to the theme.
8. **Assessment and Documentation**: Prepare observation tools and assessment methods that align with objectives. Document children's progress and share it with families.
9. **Daily Routines, Transitions, and Reflection**: Embed learning opportunities in daily routines and transitions. Use songs or movement games to support smooth transitions. Reflect on and adjust the plan based on children's responses and needs.

Curriculum Implementation Evaluation/Reflection

An important part of the planning cycle involves reflecting on what was planned and implemented. Reflection is crucial for capturing strengths and areas of growth, both in the educator and the children, and the curriculum itself. This feedback is valuable for continuous improvement.

Curriculum Implementation Evaluation/Reflection

1. **Overall Impression/Comments**: Provide specific feedback about the activity.
2. **Successes**: Identify what went well during the implementation.
3. **Challenges**: Note what did not go as planned.
4. **Interactions**: Describe the types of interactions that took place (child-child, child-adult).
5. **Children's Responses**: Assess how individual children responded to the activity and whether their responses met expectations.
6. **Modifications for Future Implementation**: Suggest changes to encourage more participation, meet diverse developmental needs, and enhance the concept.
7. **Additional Activities**: Propose additional activities to extend learning.

Daily Curriculum Reflection

1. **Proudest Moments**: Highlight achievements and positive experiences.
2. **Areas for Improvement**: Reflect on aspects that could be done differently.
3. **Learning Experiences Provided**: Evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experiences.
4. **Interactions and Approaches**: Assess the interactions, conversations, and teaching approaches used.
5. **Personal Learning**: Reflect on personal growth and insights gained.
6. **Teaching Goals**: Set goals for future teaching practices.
7. **Ethics and Professionalism**: Reflect on lessons learned about ethics and professionalism.
8. **Other Considerations**: Note any additional reflections or considerations.

By incorporating these elements into their planning and reflection processes, educators can create a dynamic and effective learning environment that supports the holistic development of young children and ensures all requirements for learning are included.

To further support educators in their planning and implementation processes, the following Early Childhood SSAMM Unit Planning Checklist provides a comprehensive guide. This checklist ensures that all critical aspects of unit planning are addressed, from developmental appropriateness to family and community engagement. By utilizing this checklist, educators can systematically plan and evaluate their curriculum, ensuring a well-rounded and inclusive educational experience for all children.

SSAMM Unit Planning Checklist

1. Developmental Appropriateness

- Activities are tailored to the age and developmental stage of the children, including physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and language needs.
- Plans support varied learning styles and individual interests, including those of children with disabilities or language differences.
- Opportunities for exploration and creativity are embedded throughout SSAMM activities (e.g., free movement in dance or choice-based art centers).

2. Alignment with Standards and Frameworks

- Unit aligns with WMELS, Head Start ELOF, and/or NAEYC standards across multiple domains, including creative expression and social development.
- Learning objectives include Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement components that reflect DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice).
- Activities support interdisciplinary learning and meet state and program-level expectations.

3. Learning Domains and Approaches to Learning

- Physical: Art and movement activities enhance fine and gross motor skills.
- Social-Emotional: Role-play, music, and movement encourage cooperation, empathy, and emotional expression.
- Language & Literacy: Songs, storytelling, and collaborative play promote oral language development.
- Approaches to Learning: Children show initiative, curiosity, and persistence through open-ended SSAMM experiences.
- Cognitive: Children engage in problem-solving through SSAMM experiences (e.g., planning a mural or designing a group movement routine).

4. Content Area Integration: SSAMM

- Social Studies: Children explore identity, family, community roles, and cultural awareness through role-play and stories.
- Art: Self-expression and creativity are supported through open-ended use of various materials (e.g., paint, clay, fabric).
- Music: Singing, instrument play, and rhythm exploration enhance listening, memory, and cultural appreciation.
- Movement: Children engage in daily physical activity, creative dance, and drama-based movement games.

5. Integrated Curriculum and Real-World Connections

- Themes are grounded in children's everyday experiences and cultural backgrounds, making Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement meaningful and relevant.
- Activities reflect an interdisciplinary approach, intentionally connecting SSAMM with core domains such as math, science, and literacy (e.g., a community helper unit integrates role-play, songs, mural art, and movement games).
- Children are supported in asking questions, investigating ideas, and expressing their learning through SSAMM-based explorations (e.g., dramatizing community stories, creating collaborative art, or responding to music through movement).

6. Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices

- SSAMM experiences reflect the children's cultures and home languages (e.g., songs, dances, or community stories).
- Materials and visuals used in Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement reflect family traditions, customs, and values.
- Children are encouraged to share their own stories and traditions through creative expression.

7. Family and Community Engagement

- Families are invited to contribute to SSAMM activities (e.g., bringing in traditional music or participating in storytelling).
- Community visitors (e.g., artists, musicians, local helpers) are included to enrich learning.
- Activities connect home and school, encouraging families to engage in related experiences at home.

8. Classroom Environment and Materials

- Learning areas include intentionally designed SSAMM spaces (e.g., dramatic play area with cultural costumes, art studio space, music corner).
- Materials support hands-on, exploratory learning in Social Studies, Art, Music, and Movement.
- The environment supports choice, independence, and creativity during child-initiated SSAMM play.

9. Assessment and Documentation

- Observations and documentation capture learning through SSAMM (e.g., photos of group murals, video of movement routines, anecdotal notes).
- Assessment strategies align with learning goals and are used to adjust and extend SSAMM experiences.
- Children's work and progress are shared with families and used for reflection and planning.

10. Daily Routines, Transitions, and Reflection

- Songs, movement games, and visual prompts are used to support SSAMM-based transitions.
- Children reflect on their experiences through discussion, journaling, or revisiting previous projects.
- Teachers reflect on SSAMM integration and make adjustments based on children's engagement and learning needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, effective planning in early childhood education is essential for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of children. By carefully considering developmental appropriateness, aligning with educational standards, integrating various learning domains, and incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive practices, educators can design engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, involving families and the community, preparing the classroom environment, and continuously reflecting on and evaluating the curriculum are crucial components of successful planning. These efforts ensure that children receive a holistic education that fosters their cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and language development, ultimately supporting their overall growth and readiness for future learning.

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