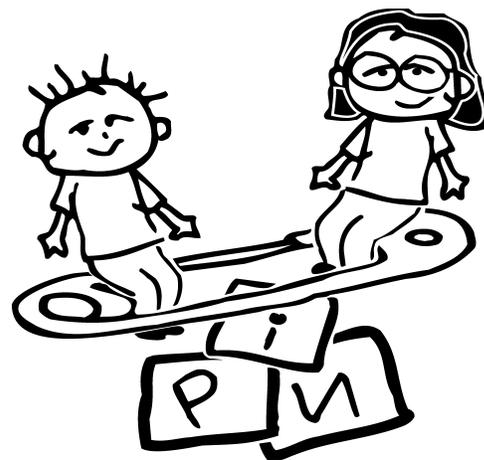


Preschool Inclusion News



Winter 03

Philadelphia Inclusion Network
Child & Family Studies Research Programs

Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences

Much of a child's day consists of routines and activities, whether at home or in childcare. These routines and activities include but are not limited to arrival/departure, feeding, dressing, diapering/toileting, and playing. Routines are generally short in time and are often repeated throughout the day. Therefore, caregivers should provide children with many meaningful learning experiences during these daily routines and other activities throughout the day.

A first step to increasing children's opportunities to learn within routines and activities is to understand the individual differences among children. Children are likely to have different interests and learning needs due to their different chronological ages. What may be of interest to a two year old is unlikely to be of interest in the same way to a four-year old. Children also have different interests based on experiences, talents, likes or dislikes. For example, some children may lean towards interests in art or reading, while others may be more interested in physical activity. Children may have different learning needs, not based on chronological age, but on their abilities. Some children may be able to sit and listen to a

story, while others of the same age, may enjoy routines and activities involving movement. Once a child care provider understands the differences among children in terms of their interests, likes, needs, dislikes, gifts, and talents, each child's strengths and interests can become the basis on which learning opportunities are built.

Here's an example that illustrates how one child care provider uses routines as learning experiences: Mattie, a child care provider, used the neighborhood around her childcare program and the typical routine of taking a walk outside to provide opportunities for children to learn about the environment and science. She integrated the experiences that the children had on their walk with structured activities during the morning schedule. She was able to build on the interests of the children by offering opportunities for the children to practice individual abilities such as expressing themselves, using creative expression, and listening. Examples of activities could include painting a picture of

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BOOK NOOK

Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences

Szanton, E.S. (1997). *Creating child-centered programs for infants and toddlers*. Children's Resource International, Inc.

For more information, Email: criinc@aol.com

Seefeldt, C. (2001). *Playing to learn: Activities and experiences that build learning connections*. Gryphon House Inc.

For more information: <http://www.gryphonhouse.com>



Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences

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what children saw on their walk and then telling a story about it; or collecting things such as leaves, making a class tree as an art project, using the leaves that were collected and talking about how trees grow. Planting seeds for trees and having the children take care of them is another way to connect the walk outside with a science activity.

In addition to understanding children's individual differences within routines and activities, it is necessary to plan a schedule which will help children have predictable routines. As children learn routines, they begin learning the skills necessary for independence and they begin to learn what is expected of them. While schedules are beneficial, it is important to have flexibility and balance during routines and activities in order to ensure that each child's needs are being met. Taking an unexpected walk on a beautiful day in between meal and nap time or allowing children who are not tired to read quietly while other children take a nap are two ways of having flexibility for all children during routines.

Having a balance of quiet and active times throughout the day is important as well. The balance of activities will vary for each child. For example, young infants will require more quiet times to sleep during the day than will more mobile infants and toddlers. Having a flexible and balanced schedule of routines and activities will help caregivers to be able to meet the needs of all children in their care.



Learning During Routines

Young Infants

- Having predictable routines during the day, helps infants to anticipate interactions which will allow them to have their needs met.
- Caregivers can encourage infants to participate in routines by talking to them and explaining what is happening and what will be happening next.
- Playing interactive games with infants during routines such as Peek-a-Boo helps them to participate in routines such as diapering, dressing, and feeding.

Older Infants

- Infants who are able to crawl and/or walk, gain a sense of control over their environment.
- The ability for infants to be more mobile, adds action to their routines and activities.
- Infants may become frustrated during routines as they try to be independent. Caregivers must find a balance between providing the infants with necessary support to complete a routine and with allowing them to be independent.

- Caregivers can provide support to infants during routines by making eye contact, using gentle touch to guide the infants' actions, and describing to the child what is happening using short, grammatically correct phrases and sentences.

Toddlers

- During routines and activities, toddlers are now becoming more independent with feeding and dressing themselves, as well as learning to share and cooperate with others.
- Learning may be accomplished by testing the limits of caregivers and the environment to find out what effect they have on their surroundings. This testing limits allows them to learn the concept of "cause and effect" (ie. "If I do this, then that happens as a result")
- Toddlers can understand why routines are important and can suggest different ways of accomplishing a task.

Szanton, E.S. (1997). *Creating*

"What a difference it made when I stuck to the same routines during the day. The children were so much happier and my day was so much easier!"

—Day Care Provider





“We’ve given then children jobs during lunchtime. Now the children are setting the table and cleaning up after lunch. They are now more of a part of the routine and the transitions to and from lunch are much less chaotic.”

—Day Care Provider



Teaching During Routines

Arriving and Departing Routines:

- When caregivers greet children in the morning, it helps to ease the transition for children from home to child care. Having the same caregiver greet the same children everyday provides consistency in children’s routines, which helps children to anticipate their needs being met.
- During departure, caregivers can help prepare the children for the transition from child care to home. Talking the children through the “end-of-the-day” activity and encouraging the parents to become involved with that activity will help to ease any hesitation children might have about leaving the child care program.

Feeding Routines:

- Feeding times can help strengthen the bonds between caregivers and children. These routines during the day provide opportunities for the caregiver to enhance children’s communication skills by interacting with them and talking to them about what is happening during the routine.
- Feeding routines teach the skills that children need to be independent and self-reliant (ie. children learn to ask for things and practice their fine motor skills as they use their fingers or utensils).

Diapering and Toileting Routines:

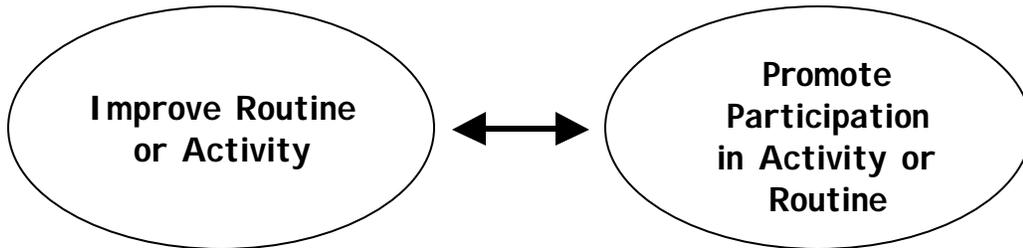
- These routines provide repeated opportunities throughout the day to learn and practice skills related to dressing, undressing, and hygiene (ie. hand-washing).
- Diapering provides opportunities for one-to-one interactions between caregiver and child. Making eye contact and engaging in simple conversation with the child are ways to promote interactions.

Dressing and Undressing Routines:

- These routines encourage one-to-one interactions between caregiver and child, games such as “This Little Piggy” can be played while engaging in dressing and undressing.
- Children have opportunities to observe other children dress themselves and begin to model for each other.
- Children are able to practice sequencing (ie. the sock goes on before the shoe)

Adaptation Framework

Facilitating Children's Participation



Environmental Accommodations

- Adapt Room Set-up
- Adapt/Select Equipment
- Equipment/Adaptations for Positioning

Select or Adapt Activity

Adapt Materials

Adapt Requirements or Instructions

Have Another Child Help-

- Peer Assistance/Tutoring
- Cooperative Learning

Have an Individual Child do Something Different

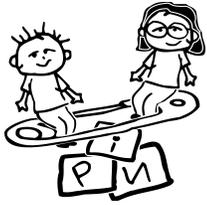
Have an Adult Help a Child Do the Activity

Have an Individual Child Do Something Outside of the Room (with an Adult)

"Sometimes it takes a lot for me to come up with different ways to do an activity so that all children can participate in it. When I do, I see how excited the children are and it's so much better."

—Day Care Provider





Adapting Routines and Activities

When considering daily routines and activities, it is important to remember that not every child is going to be able to participate in these routines and activities in the same way. Some children may need more support than others, or may need to participate in different ways. The Adaptation Framework on the previous page, provides ways to look at making adaptations to routines and activities so that each child can be successful.

There are **5 first levels** of making adaptations for children, going from **least intrusive** to **most intrusive**. The first level, **Environment**, focuses on the physical environment, such as ways to rearrange furniture to allow a child in a wheelchair to move freely. The second level is **Activity**, where the activity is actually changed so the child can participate, such as modifying the length of time an activity lasts for to accommodate a child's needs. **Materials** is the third level, focusing on altering or substituting materials being used in routines and activities. This could mean making a pencil or crayon thicker by putting a foam curler around it or wrapping playdough around it to make it easier for the child to hold. The fourth level is **Instructions**, or changing the requirements of an activity or routine. This could mean changing the way instructions are presented such as using pictures instead of words, or asking the child to do one step at a time. The last level is **Assistance**, taking into consideration levels of help given to a child. An example could mean having a buddy system to help children model each other during their routines and activities.

PLEASE UPDATE OR ADD YOUR INFORMATION TO THE MAIL LIST

FAX to 215-503-1640 or mail to Child & Family Studies, Thomas Jefferson University,
130 South 9th Street, 5th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5233.

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I RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS NEWSLETTER _____ ON _____
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Here's the Situation...

Try this Adaptation...

Meal Time Adaptations

Here's the situation: Children need direction when finding their chairs at the table

Try this adaptation: I identify the children's places at the table using their handprints or using different colored chairs OR I identify children's places at the table with their name and picture.

Meal Time Adaptations

Here's the situation: Children need direction when finding their chairs at the table

Try this adaptation: Use a buddy system for seating so the same 2 children sit next to each other at the same table each day and help each other find their seats.

"Clean-up time used to be a disaster! Toys and materials never got put back where they belonged. Once I put pictures on lower shelves to show children where things went, clean-up time was much smoother and the children were very involved in it."

—Day Care Provider



2003 will bring a change to our newsletter. You will now be receiving a Child and Family Studies Research Programs newsletter. In order for us to be able to update our mailing list and for you to continue to receive our newsletter, please fill out the form on the second to last page of this newsletter and mail it back to us!

Preschool Inclusion News

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Inside This Issue

***Creating Meaningful Learning
Experiences for Children***
