



Approaches to Learning

Infants and Toddlers

Children are born with a desire to learn and figure things out, but they learn their own way. Check out these strategies to support your child's curiosity, problem solving, and more!

Curiosity, Information-Seeking, and Eagerness

Support children's exploration and discovery. For infants, this may begin with providing tummy time using stimulating toys.

Introduce new materials to help your child use all their senses and capture their interest, like music, finger paint, fabric, boxes, a variety of books, etc. This will encourage them to try new experiences.

Show genuine curiosity and excitement. Be a role model, showing how to approach new situations and engage in learning.

Initiative, Effort, Engagement, and Persistence

Support your child's success and engagement by providing them materials and activities based on their interests, personality, and skill level.

Encourage children to keep trying by asking questions and offering support. Say things like "Where do you think this puzzle piece could go?" and "It's hard, but you are really trying."

Emphasize the importance of effort, not just achievement. Encourage and praise your child's efforts.



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Risk-Taking, Problem Solving, Flexibility, and Resiliency



Model flexibility and positive approaches to new experiences. Be willing to try new ideas, activities, materials, foods, etc. This helps to not only demonstrate flexibility, but also risk-taking and resiliency.

Provide plenty of open-ended materials (blocks, water, buckets, newspaper, etc.), and encourage your child to use them in new ways.

Talk about what you are seeing, doing, and thinking. Use language to identify items in the environment, such as what you are eating, what your child is doing, and how you are solving a problem. Try saying “We ran out of juice, so I’m going to pour some water instead.”

Play and Imagination

Allow time for your child to engage with activities they choose, and try to avoid rushing. This promotes engagement, independence, initiative, and persistence.

Periodically rotate toys and materials to spark new ideas.

Promote imaginative play and provide supportive props such as costumes, kitchen items, dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, junk mail, cash registers, bags, pretend tools and equipment, and microphones.

Expand children’s experiences by exploring new places and introducing them to new indoor and outdoor activities.



This information was adapted from the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines. To learn more, talk to your childcare provider or visit sdstepahead.com.