

# Reading Assignment

## *Following Children's Interests*



# Following Children's Interests

- **Plan activities.** As you observe children, take note of what they are interested in. This will guide and inspire you during team planning, ensuring that children are engaged.
- **Rotate materials.** Following careful observation, rotate materials based on children's interests. This can be done by rotating one or two materials weekly or biweekly, or several materials monthly. Rotating materials too frequently could limit children's opportunity to try out new materials and can reduce the consistency and familiarity you are striving for in your classroom. To start, remove the materials they no longer use or express an interest in and add similar types of materials based on what they spend the most time using. For example, if children are spending a lot of time exploring dishes and real items from home, add more dishes of different types. Remember to avoid overstimulating children with too many materials — if you add something new, remove another material that children do not use frequently. If there are too many toys in a play space, it can be hard for children to choose what they want to use or to find the toys they typically enjoy using.
- **Support children's explorations.** Be sure that the materials children use most frequently are easy to access and plentiful to allow many children to use them at the same time. This might mean moving something from a shelf onto the floor so that children can crawl over to the basket and retrieve materials without also having to pull the basket off the shelf. When there are enough materials for many children to use them at one time, it reduces frustrations, conflicts between children, and wait time for children to carry out their ideas.
- **Repeat activities.** Remember that part of developing the brain and forming lifelong skills

## Following Children's Interests (continued)

involves a lot of repetition. It's okay for children to do the same things over and over and to select the same materials day after day. This might mean you keep water in the sand and water table for several days, occasionally rotating the materials that are accessible to children for use with the water. Support children by commenting on the actions they repeat and acknowledging when they try out something new.

- **Observe children daily.** Observing children daily and taking complete and objective anecdotes will help you to plan activities based on children's interests and provide you with the information you need to track their development. Remember to continue interacting as you observe and take notes. This will ensure that children receive your constant support and allow you to gather the most authentic information about their development, in their natural play setting.

- **Watch for subtle cues and aversions.**

Continue to pay careful attention to how your children communicate their needs and preferences. Because the verbal skills of toddlers can be limited, also take note of their facial expressions and body language. They are still figuring out their preferences, so remember to consider that a sensory experience might be okay one week but may be uncomfortable for a child the next week. Respond supportively to children's expressions of preferences and aversions and make adjustments accordingly.

Snyder, C. M. (2016a). Following children's interests. In J. Tangorra (Ed.), *Lesson plans for a strong start: The first 30 days for infants* (pp. 255–256). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.

Snyder, C. M. (2016b). Following children's interests. In J. Tangorra, & M. Weiner (Eds.), *Lesson plans for a strong start: The first 30 days for toddlers* (pp. 298–299). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.