

Week 4 Reading Assignment

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall



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Planning (thinking about what you are going to do before you do it) and recalling (remembering and reflecting on what you did after you did it) are intellectual processes that depend on the ability to imagine, to form mental images of materials, places, people, or actions. From HighScope's work with older children, we know that three-, four-, and five-year-olds are increasingly able to plan and recall — to think about their own future and past doings and to talk about and describe these thoughts. As older toddlers approach age two-and-a-half to three, they are beginning to develop these same capacities. They communicate these intentions and recollections through a streamlined combination of gestures, actions, and key words.



One way to support older toddlers who may be starting to plan and recall is to briefly describe what you see them doing — “You’re putting dinosaurs on blocks!”

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

Simple, brief times of planning and recalling individually with older toddlers help them to call up mental pictures of what they would like to do or what they did, to connect their ideas with these actions, to communicate their intentions to others, and to begin to organize their past actions into a simple narrative. (*Note:* Preschoolers plan and recall in small groups at fixed times in the daily routine as well as during individual adult-child interactions at opportune moments. Planning and recalling with toddlers takes place in one-on-one exchanges with caregivers, at whatever point during the day the adult senses an opening and the child's readiness.) This planning before children have started their exploration or play and recalling when they have come to a stopping point gives caregivers a chance to support children's emerging ability to think about future and past events. Planning and recalling are

the hallmarks of *executive function*, two of the higher-order abilities that will later allow children to organize and complete tasks.

Caregivers using the support strategies for choice time are already supporting toddlers' planning and recalling as they describe what they see and hear children doing:

- “You’re banging the box with your block, T.C.!”
- “Sharelle, you climbed up the ladder, and now you’re at the top!”
- “You’re turning that block a lot of different ways to try to fit it in the slot, Chris!”
- “Meagan, you’re watching Lu.”
- “James, you’re working very hard to climb onto the sofa with Tab.”

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

These descriptive statements help toddlers build the language to refer to their own actions and play-things. Eventually, with his caregiver providing a wide array of climbing choices and patiently describing what he is doing when he climbs, James, for example, as an older infant, begins to understand what it means to “climb.” By the time he reaches later toddlerhood, based on his broad range of experiences, James may well be able to picture himself climbing something before actually doing so. When his caregiver says at the beginning of choice time, “James, show me what you will play with at choice time today,” he may point to the climber and say “Cwimb!” before heading off to put this simple, toddler-appropriate plan into action.

Caregivers plan and recall with individual toddlers when they see some signs that a child might be ready for and interested in this process. One sign is the child’s ability to form mental images. In an active learning setting, infants and young toddlers accumulate a wealth of sensory-motor experience. Eventually, as older toddlers, they begin to be able to hold in mind pictures of these experiences. For example, Teri, a toddler, realizes when settling down for naptime that she does not have her favorite blanket with her. From her position lying on her cot, she cannot see the blanket, but she has a mental picture of it lying on the floor between the couch and the wall in the book area, where she last used it at choice time. Seeing that Teri can retrieve an unseen object by remembering its location, Teri’s caregiver knows that the toddler can hold an experience in mind and therefore may be ready to indicate a simple plan before going into action at choice time.

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

Other signs that a toddler may be ready to plan are the child's spontaneous actions and pronouncements. In one example, Kevin brings his caregiver a book he has selected, plops down in her lap, and says "Read!" Through his actions and words, he lets her know that he has a pretty clear picture of what he (and she!) are about to do. In another situation, Jamie pauses to look at his painting, names his splotches "feets," and then declares "more feets" before continuing to work on his idea with a new brush and new color. Saying "more feets" (and selecting a new brush and color) is his toddler shorthand for *Now I'm going to make some more feet using a different color.*

When a toddler like Teri, Kevin, or Jamie seems ready to plan, a caregiver can ask that child at the beginning of choice time (or perhaps during choice time — at the point of an activity change) a simple question about his or her intentions. It should be a question the child can answer with an action, gesture, or word. Here are examples of ways to begin:

"What will you play with, Jody?" Jody leans against her caregiver and looks around.

"Can you show me something you'd like to play with?" asks her caregiver. Jody goes to the doll buggy, grabs the handle, and looks back at her caregiver, who nods and says, "You're going to play with the buggy." Jody pushes the buggy toward the house area.

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

“Can you show me where you will play, Amir?” Amir points toward the block area. “Oh, you’re going to play in the block area,” says his caregiver. Amir nods and heads for the shelf of wooden unit blocks.



“What will you do at choice time, Mimi?” Mimi sits in her caregiver’s lap, removes her thumb from her mouth, points to a child drawing with markers on a large sheet of white paper, and says, “Do that!” “Oh, you’re going to draw with markers, like Elana,” interprets her caregiver. Mimi nods and repeats, “Do that!” “That’s what you’re going to do,” affirms her caregiver. Mimi heads for the art area, selects a sheet of paper and a marker, and begins.

Note that planning with toddlers is a brief, intimate, one-to-one interaction. The caregiver kneels or sits on the floor next to the child, often putting an arm around the child or in some way offering comfortable physical contact. The child communicates a plan by using actions (pointing, nodding, looking at, or going to an object or place) and sometimes by saying a key word or two (naming a material, action, or possibly a peer already engaged in that activity or with whom he or she wants to play). When the caregiver translates the toddler’s plan into a short verbal statement, it is a way of checking to make sure the child’s intentions are understood. It’s a good idea for caregivers to ask toddlers about their plans for choice time when they are in a relatively open part of the play space, where it is easy for them to look around to see what their choices are.

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

Recalling with toddlers often begins quite spontaneously, like this, as children share home stories with their caregivers:

When he arrives in the morning, Kamari runs to his caregiver, saying “Puppy, puppy!” “Oh, Kamari,” exclaims his caregiver, “you saw a puppy?” “Puppy Nama’s,” he explains. His mom nods, backing up his story. “You saw a puppy at your Nama’s house?” asks his caregiver. “Lick me!” says Kamari. “And the puppy licked you!” responds his caregiver.

This puppy story illustrates how recalling occurs because children, like adults, want to share the important things that happen to them with the important people in their lives. The recalling about a toddler’s activity might occur *during* choice time, as Jody leaves playing with the doll buggy to play



Like planning, recalling is a brief, intimate caregiver-toddler exchange. “Something happened!” comments the caregiver. “Popped!” says the toddler to her caregiver, pointing to the pop-up toy.

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall (continued)

with puzzles, for example. Or the recalling might occur *at the end of* choice time, as Amir is putting away some blocks. A caregiver may encourage a child to recall with a simple statement or question:

“I saw you pushing this doll buggy over to the climber, Jody,” says her caregiver. She has joined Jody, who is now standing next to the buggy but gazing across the room. Jody nods. “What did you do with the buggy?” asks her caregiver. “Babies,” says Jody patting the babies in the buggy. “You put babies in the buggy?” asks her caregiver. Jody nods yes. Then Jody takes her caregiver’s hand, leads her across the room to the puzzle shelf, and says “Puzzles!” She is announcing her next plan. “Oh, so now you plan to play with puzzles,” her caregiver says, interpreting Jody’s new plan. Jody dumps out the three-piece duck puzzle and begins to move the pieces about.

“What did you do with the blocks, Amir?” his caregiver asks, as she and Amir stack the blocks on the shelf at the end of choice time. Amir raises his arm over his head and says “Up.” “You stacked the blocks up. I remember — I saw you!” interprets his caregiver. “Up, up, up!” says Amir. “You stacked the blocks up, up, up!” his caregiver affirms.

Like planning, recalling is a brief, intimate caregiver-toddler exchange. Either one — planning or recalling — may occur at almost any time of the day. At naptime, for example, Mimi sits on her cot, taking off her shoes and socks. She looks up and sees her drawing hanging on the wall. “Me do!” she says. When her caregiver sees what Mimi is looking at, she tries filling in the context for her story: “That’s the picture you drew in the art area today.” “Me draw!” agrees Mimi, making drawing motions with her arm. “You moved your arm back and forth to draw,” comments her caregiver.

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The idea behind planning and recalling with older toddlers is to provide them the opportunity to think about what they are going to do and what they have done and to express these thoughts in their own particular blend of actions and words. To do so, each child needs individual support from an attentive caregiver and freedom to get started on his or her plan right away. Although as noted above, planning and recalling generally take place one-on-one, for some toddlers who are approaching three years of age and playing in small groups, these processes might take place with a group of two or three. (See *Strategies for Planning and Recalling With Older Toddlers*.) This initiation into small-group planning and recall time provides an early experience in listening and sharing (communication, language, and literacy) and develops a sense of participation in group routines (social and emotional development).



The caregiver encourages children to find their letter link symbol and place it in the area or by the material they want to work with for choice time.