

Essential Ingredients of Active Learning: A Summary

Materials: There are abundant materials that children can use in many ways.

- ___ Children use a variety of materials.
 - ___ Practical everyday objects
 - ___ Natural and found materials
 - ___ Tools
 - ___ Messy, sticky, gooey, drippy, squishy materials
 - ___ Heavy, large materials
 - ___ Easy-to-handle materials
- ___ Children have space to use materials.
- ___ Children have time to use materials.

Manipulation: Adults encourage children to handle, explore, and work freely with materials.

- ___ Children explore actively with all their senses.
- ___ Children discover relationships through direct experience.
- ___ Children transform and combine materials.
- ___ Children use age-appropriate tools and equipment.
- ___ Children use their large muscles.

Choice: The child chooses what to do.

- ___ Children initiate activities that grow from personal interests and intentions.
- ___ Children choose materials.
- ___ Children decide what to do with materials.

Child language and thought: Children describe what they are doing and understanding.

- ___ Children talk about their experiences.
- ___ Children talk about what they are doing in their own words.
- ___ Children modify their thinking to take new learning into account.

Adult scaffolding: Adults support children’s current level of thinking and challenge them to advance to the next stage.

- ___ Adults form partnerships with children.
 - ___ Put themselves on children’s physical level.
 - ___ Follow children’s ideas and interests.
 - ___ Converse in a give-and-take style.
- ___ Adults seek out children’s intentions.
 - ___ Acknowledge children’s choices and actions.
 - ___ Use materials in the same way children are using them.
 - ___ Watch what children do with materials.
 - ___ Ask children about their intentions.
- ___ Adults listen for and encourage children’s thinking.
 - ___ Listen to children as they work and play.
 - ___ Converse with children about what they are doing and thinking.
 - ___ Focus on children’s actions.
 - ___ Make comments that repeat, amplify, and build on what the child says.
 - ___ Pause frequently to give children time to think and gather their thoughts into words.
 - ___ Accept children’s answers and explanations even when they are “wrong.”
- ___ Adults encourage children to do things for themselves.
 - ___ Stand by patiently and wait while children take care of things independently.
 - ___ Show understanding of children’s mishaps.
 - ___ Refer children to one another for ideas, assistance, and conversation.
 - ___ Encourage children to ask and answer their own questions.