

## How Adults Use the KDIs to Support Early Learning

Teachers and caregivers can best know, understand, and support each child in their care through close attention, observation, and both physical and verbal interaction. The KDIs guide adults in this effort by broadly defining the actions and learning of sensory-motor children as they build an understanding of their world through direct experiences with people, objects, and daily routines.

The KDIs help caregivers organize, interpret, and act on what they see children doing. When Samantha, a young toddler, unties one of her caregiver's shoes and giggles, her caregiver, Ida, thinks of KDI 5. *Attachment: Children form an attachment to a primary caregiver* (under social and emotional development) and thus interprets Samantha's action as a bid for a relationship. Ida knows from her observations of children and from her

understanding of child development that playful teasing is one way toddlers typically interact with trusted adults.

To let Samantha know that she will play the game Samantha has initiated and to encourage KDI 18. *Two-way communication: Children participate in two-way communication* (under communication, language, and literacy), Ida says to Samantha, in mock surprise, "Oh, dear, what happened to my shoe?" Taking this as her cue to continue, Samantha immediately unties Ida's other shoe. "Oh, dear," says Ida, taking her turn in the exchange, "what happened to my other shoe?" After Ida ties her shoes, Samantha starts the game again. In this fashion, Samantha learns both to trust herself to initiate interactions with her caregiver and to trust her caregiver to respond to her actions as playful rather than naughty.

The KDIs help caregivers to understand children's development and thus make decisions about what to do the next day, based on what they observed children doing today: "At lunchtime, I noticed Elron exploring and mashing his mashed potatoes with his hands," Ida says to Marta, her teammate. Ida is thinking about KDI 22. *Exploring objects: Children explore objects with their hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears, and nose* (under cognitive development). "So," she asks Marta, "to extend Elron's mashing of gooey things with his hands, what do you think about using clay tomorrow at group time?"

The KDIs help caregivers to select materials and equipment to add to the

## Active Learning and the KDIs: A Summary

### Five Ingredients of Active Learning

#### Materials: There are a variety of materials infants and toddlers can use in many ways.

- Children explore and play with materials rich in sensory appeal:
  - Everyday household objects
  - Natural and found materials
  - Soft, cuddly materials
  - Easy-to-handle materials
  - Squishy, messy materials
  - Materials children can set in motion
  - Materials children can pull themselves up on
  - Materials children can make noise with
- Children have access to people.
- Children have a safe place to explore and play with materials.
- Children have time to explore and play with materials.
- Children have access to materials throughout the day.
- Children have access to materials over long periods of time.

#### Manipulation: Infants and toddlers use their whole bodies and all of their senses to manipulate materials freely.

- Children explore materials with all of their senses (eyes, hands, feet, mouths, ears).

- Children experiment with materials to find out what they do, return to favorite materials and people, and repeat satisfying actions.
- Children use their whole bodies to reach, grasp, roll, sit, crawl, walk, climb, carry from place to place, and so forth.
- Children use materials to imitate actions.

#### Choice: Infants and toddlers choose what to do.

- Children make choices and decisions all day long.
- Children express preferences for people, materials, and experiences.
- Children follow their own intentions and initiatives.
- Children decide how to explore and what to do with materials.
- Child use materials to do things for themselves.

#### Child communication, language, and thought: Infants and toddlers communicate and use language about what they need, discover, know, and do.

- Children communicate their needs, feelings, discoveries, and ideas in their own individual ways and at their own pace.
- Children initiate contact with caregivers.

- Children express feelings and communicate about discoveries to receptive and responsive caregivers.
- Children string together sounds, gestures, and words in a fashion that makes sense to them.
- Children communicate through sign language.

#### Adult scaffolding: Infants and toddlers learn within the context of trusting relationships.

- Caregivers take interest in children's play.
- Caregivers enjoy children's actions and explorations.
- Caregivers communicate warmth and respect.
- Caregivers acknowledge children's feelings, from delight to frustration.
- Caregivers provide positive physical contact, including cuddling, hugging, holding, stroking, and lap-holding.
- Caregivers give each child their full attention and respond readily to the child's signals and approaches, communication, and talk.
- Caregivers talk with children, tell children what will happen next, encourage children's problem solving, and read to children.

## Active Learning and the KDIs: A Summary

### KDIs: The Content Infants and Toddlers Learn

Caregivers are familiar with the key developmental indicators (KDIs) in these areas:

- ❑ **Approaches to learning:** Children show initiative in solving problems, doing things for themselves, and learning about their world.
- ❑ **Social and emotional development:** Children express their feelings, differentiate themselves from others, and form relationships with adults and peers.
- ❑ **Physical development and health:** Children explore the movements their bodies are capable of making and use their bodies to learn about the world.
- ❑ **Communication, language, and literacy:** Children communicate with gestures, sounds, and words to establish human connections and explore printed materials.
- ❑ **Cognitive development:** Children develop early ideas about quantity and number, navigate their environment, discover the attributes of objects, and develop ideas about time from the sequence of their daily activities.
- ❑ **Creative arts:** Children exercise curiosity and creativity by exploring art materials, pretending, and engaging with the sounds of music.

### How caregivers use the KDIs

- ❑ Caregivers are familiar with the KDIs related to approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; communication, language, and literacy; cognitive development; and creative arts.
- ❑ Caregivers observe children and interpret their actions in light of the KDIs.
- ❑ Caregivers use the KDIs to guide their interactions with children, to plan for activities that support children's learning and development, and to guide their selection of materials for children.

play space and to think of interactions and experiences that might support and build on children's actions, interests, and need for repetition during each part of the day.

Finally, the KDIs help caregivers to track children's growth and development, share and interpret children's actions to parents, and work together with parents to devise common strategies for supporting

children's development — in approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; communication, language, and literacy; cognitive development; and creative arts — at home and in their care setting. For more about using the KDIs to enhance teamwork on behalf of children and to assess and scaffold their learning, see Chapters 2 and 6, respectively.