

Classroom Learning Activities

Everyday classroom activities provide children many different opportunities for learning. Increasing children's participation and learning in these everyday learning environments involves providing children activities that are interest-based and encouraging development of new skills.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Classroom Learning Opportunities

- Observe children in classroom activities to identify their interests in activities, actions, toys, and people; that is, their likes, preferences, and favorites. Smiling and laughing, getting excited, asking for something frequently, choosing an object or activity often, maintaining engagement in an activity, and working hard at an activity are also indicators of children's interests.
- Recognize the everyday classroom activities that are sources of children's learning opportunities. Consider construction activities like playing with blocks or manipulatives; movement and music activities like playing *Simon Says*, dancing, or singing; and dramatic play activities like playing with dolls and home living materials. Also think about science activities like using magnets or magnifying lenses, art activities like painting or making prints, water and sand activities, and everyday classroom activities with books or computers. Also consider everyday routines like arrival and departure times, meal or snack times, and toileting.
- Provide children frequent opportunities to participate in classroom activities that match their interests and afford them many different learning opportunities. Sand play, for example provides children opportunities to measure, pour, and sift sand; dig with a shovel; make roads for toy vehicles; share buckets with friends; build a sand castle; and so forth. Music activities afford children opportunities like singing and humming, playing a musical instrument, clapping hands in time to the music, swaying and dancing alone and with friends, making up silly words to a song, and hearing sounds of different instruments. Departure time provides children opportunities to greet a parent at the end of the day, tell a parent about the events of the day, put on coats and boots, and say good-bye to teachers and friends.
- Pay attention and support children's participation in activities that are interesting by responding promptly and positively when you notice them using their abilities in the activities. Join in their play, take turns, acknowledge their behavior or actions, show your excitement, comment on or describe what they are doing, or praise them for their efforts. Responding positively to children will help them sustain their engagement in the activity and ensure that they have many opportunities for learning.
- Encourage children to elaborate or expand on their behavior in classroom activities. Make suggestions or ask questions that get them to do something a little bit differently. Model new behavior and reinforce variations in their behavior. Add toys or materials to their play so they are encouraged to do something new.

A Quick Peek The children in Flo's classroom loved to play at cooking meals. Flo noticed as, for the third time in a week, Jacob and Ari pretended to set up a restaurant and serve other children. As part of their pretend play, they took orders for meals, stirred and poured as they pretended to cook, called out ingredients, served plates, and accepted payment for the meals. At "closing time," Flo heard Jacob tell Ari, "Sarah said she wants tofu tomorrow." Ari looked dismayed as he explained, "We don't have that. We need to get some." Jacob told Flo, "We need to



go to the store to get some tofu." Flo replied, "It sounds like you certainly do." She suggested they make a grocery list so they would remember what they needed for the next day's meals. The boys grabbed a grocery sales flyer and showed it to Flo, saying that they could find things in the pictures. Flo helped them find paper and crayons and held the flyer as each boy "read" the pictures of grocery items and "wrote" a list. She encouraged them to plan how each ingredient could be used in their restaurant. Not surprisingly, they served their new dishes the next day.

You'll know the practice is working if ...

- Children participate and stay involved in a variety of classroom activities
- Children do many different things while engaged in the classroom activities
- Children demonstrate new behavior and skills in the classroom activities

For more information about natural-environment learning activities, try these online resources:

- [Science in the Preschool Classroom](#)
- [Calendar Time for Young Children](#)