Primetime Teaching, Purposeful Play, and Powerhouse Guidance: For Behavior and Learning Success

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Primetime teaching: Applying child development and standards to enrich children's learning.

Purposeful play: Engaging children in meaningful exploration to challenge and stimulate development.

Positive Guidance: Reframing guidance as effective skill-building for increasing competence.

Continuum of Teaching Strategies		
Child-Discovery Learning Children are: Active explorers	The role of the teacher is to prepare the setting, actively observe and document, and ensure appropriate challenge. Intervene when safety or frustration are present.	When? During exploration, imaginative play, building, construction, task-oriented play.
Child-Directed Learning Children are: Creative designers	The role of the teacher is to prepare the setting, scaffold and support learning, stimulate emerging skills, increase complexity and challenge, introduce and extend concepts, and enhance vocabulary.	When? During dramatic play and manipulative or exploratory play.
Shared Learning for Emergent Curriculum Children are: Collaborative investigators	The role of the teacher is to document questions, provide processes and resources, and support demonstration of new knowledge	When? During teaching moments, short-term projects, or longer-term investigations.
Teacher-Guided Learning Children are: Active participants	The role of the teacher is to introduce skills, strategies and concepts, demonstrate and scaffold learning, and facilitate cooperative activities.	When? During new activities and with new concepts or materials.
Teacher-Directed Learning Children are: Engaged learners	The role of the teacher is to teach and model new skills, and lead or facilitate mini-lessons, games, or small and large group interactive activities.	When? During content mini-lessons, reading, math games, and math talk.

Each of these approaches:

- Can be linked to early learning guidelines, NAEYC standards, and state standards to choose essential goals and objectives for learning.
- Require a child-centered understanding of observation, documentation, and assessment.
- Require reflection to consider what went well, what you want to do differently next time, and to explore what you learned about children and the impact of your strategies.

Talking during meals, transitions, and caring routines:

- **What did you learn when…?** What did you see/do?"
- **What/how do you think?** Ask "What do you think…" and "How do you think…" questions. "What are the ingredients in our soup?" "How do you think the milk got from the cow to your cup?" "What does the snow feel like?"
- **Guess what I saw?** I saw six school busses in a row." "I saw a building so tall, I had to look up to see the top." "I heard a flock of geese honking." "I saw a squirrel chasing a chipmunk."
- **Did you know?** "Did you know a dog sleeps more hours a day than you do?" "Did you know cats see in the dark?" "Did you know there are 27 bones in your hand and 26 in your foot?"
- **How did it go? Tell me what happened.** When a family says a pet was taken to the veterinarian, be sure to follow up. Ask the child to tell you what happened.

Play has a positive impact on many areas of children's development and learning:

- Play promotes social-emotional skills, self-regulation, executive function, and prosocial behaviors (Yogman, Garner, Hutchinson, Hirsh-Pasek, and Michnick Golinkoff 2018).
- Play fosters curiosity, self-discovery, and creativity (Berke 2016).
- Outdoor play prompts real-world learning, social interaction and collaboration, appropriate risk taking, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills (Kinsner 2019).
- Extended play experiences are essential for mediating stress and contribute to the development of self-regulation (Foley 2017).
- Dramatic play introduces problems, situations, themes, and daily life scenarios. Play helps children develop symbolic thinking and explore concepts and new ideas (Brown 2017).
- Dramatic play connects learning to prior knowledge and cultural contexts (Karabon 2017).
- Play promotes language, cognitive, and social skills critical to academic success (Spiewak Toub, Hassinger-Das, Turner Nesbitt, Ilgaz, Skolnick Weisberg and Hirsh-Pasek 2018).
- Active or big-body play, construction play, and functional play strengthen a range of physical and practical life skills (Lillard, Learner, Hopkins, Dore, Smith, and Palmquist 2013).
- Children try out ideas and test their hypotheses, processes of scientific inquiry (Desouza 2017).
- Play engages children in meaningful learning and is a critical pedagogical tool for teaching (Barblet, Knaus, and Barratt-Pugh 2016).

Five questions to plan for play:

1. What are the goals for materials and activities? What new skills or information do you want children to discover, learn, practice, or understand?
2. What method of teaching or activity will provide the richest and most meaningful way for children reach those goals?
3. What teaching strategies will best engage children during the activity?
4. How will children demonstrate that they have mastered the skill, vocabulary, disposition, or competency?
5. What kind of documentation will capture children's learning?

Powerhouse Positive Guidance

Guidance means to teach and train positive habits of behavior and strengthen children's self-regulation.

- Shift from compliance to cooperation.
- Become proactive instead of reactive.
- Leave every interaction with success for the child.
- Replace -rather than stop behaviors.
- Build confidence, skills, strategies, and assets – every time.
- Raise expectations – rather than settle.
- Speak positively – rather than complain about behavior. Let each child hear you talk positively about their contributions.
- Words are powerful – and what is insignificant to you may be the defining moment of a child's (or parent's) life. Give specific, detailed positive feedback!

1. Model the behavior you want. Show children by example how to behave. What does this really mean? Speak with respect. Don't touch bodies or belongings without permission. Show instead of tell.

2. Use effective redirection. Rather than mention what should not be done (or tell a child to stop), *describe a safe, positive choice or solution*. Effective redirection is an incompatible alternative. It replaces rather than stops a behavior. "Drive around Tommy." (Rather than "Don't hit Tommy.") "Look for your feet." (Rather than, "Look out. Don't bump Charlie.")

3. Offer choices. Make a simple statement that describes a needed behavior, then add two choices to shift responsibility to the child. "Naptime. Do you want to snuggle with your blanket or teddy bear?" "Time to pick up toys. Do you want to help pick up the cars or the bears?"

4. Keep it simple. Young children have a short attention span. Give brief, one-step instructions. For a child climbing, say, "Feet on the floor," rather than, "Look out, Shalynn. You will fall off that chair and hurt yourself. "Don't say, "Time to line up," unless you plan to do it immediately! Say what you will do.

5. Encourage and empower success. "Three cheers for my kind children. You were helping each other." "Awesome! We had fun cleaning up together." "I am so happy to read with you. You are a good book reader." Every interaction between you and a child should result in success for the child. Support and encourage understanding and skill.

***Tips for Teaching*: Getting organized and staying inspired**

- **Take small steps.** Try one new strategy at a time. See how children respond. Then add on to the materials and strategies you use. Small steps lead to big impact.
- **Set aside a dedicated time each week to prepare.** Add lesson planning to your weekly and monthly calendar. You'll "get on top" of the sequence of planning by dedicating time. You will be able to schedule time to prepare materials, find or borrow books, and arrange spaces.
- **Keep a reflection journal.** Answer two simple prompts: "What did I do and how did it turn out?" And – "What did I observe and what did I learn?" Your answers will help you recognize the incredible influence you have in teaching.
- **Talk to colleagues.** When teaching goes well, share your experience. When you need fresh ideas or support to overcome a challenge, reach out and connect. You and your colleagues can grow together.

***Tips for Teaching*: Maximizing language support**

- **Build on what children know.** Children reenact what they know, such as visiting the market, going to the bakery, taking the subway in the city, or observing farming activities in a rural rea.
- **Introduce vocabulary.** Use a 4 X 6 card. Include math concept words like first, second, third, same, different, less, more, large, bigger, smaller, all, and none. Position words include above, below, beside, behind, in front, back, inside, next to, and outside. Descriptive words include open, closed, balanced, centered, tall, short, and bridge. Shape words include square, circle, triangle, cube, cylinder, and tube.
- **Use specific language.** Instead of saying, "Put that over there," say, "Hang your red scarf on the hook." Instead of, "You can play with that if you want," say, "You and Joshua can choose the giraffe puzzle or the lion puzzle." "The green beans are vegetables that are cooked. Cucumbers and carrots are not cooked. Can you name vegetables that we cook?"
- **Introduce advanced language and vocabulary.** Use specific descriptive words for objects, events, and emotions. "It feels breezy. Breezy is another word for windy." "The purple flowers are African violets. The leaves are fuzzy and curled. Let's give them some water." "A group of cows is called a herd. Young cows are called heifers and bulls."
- **Use back-and-forth exchanges during conversation.** Child: "I want to paint." Teacher: "Let's get a new paper and fresh water. What are you thinking about painting?" Child: "I want to make a picture of my house." Teacher: "What will you paint in the yard?" Child: "My family and my dog." Teacher: "You can paint your whole family."
- **Scaffold thinking.** Use verbal mapping to describe what children are doing or what you are doing. "I think if I move the puzzle over, the rest of the pieces won't fall off the table." "I see you organized your scale and blocks before you got started. That will make your work easier."
- **Add on information or elaborate what children say. Repeat and expand.** Child: "I saw a fuzzy worm." Teacher: "You saw a brown caterpillar with yellow stripes. It looks like a fuzzy worm, but it has a soft body and lots of legs. Do you see the legs? A caterpillar will spin a cocoon called a chrysalis and become a butterfly."
- **Ask open-ended thinking questions.** Ask "how, why, what if, and what else" questions to explain and predict and count how many. "How did you make your structure get smaller on top?" "Why do you think that happened?"
- **Notice and narrate children's actions, strategies, and experiences.** Draw attention to strategies that work well. "You asked for help when Declan took your car. Let's get the basket of cars so he can have one." "You look sad. Would you like to choose a book to read with me?" "I see you are feeling frustrated. Tell me about what you need."
- **Describe what children see.** "Are you watching the squirrel? Do you see its nest? Look higher to the left. Do you see the big clump of leaves? What do you notice about the leaves?" (Answer: They are thick. The leaves are packed into the tree branches.)
- **Encourage book reading.** Add informational books with realistic drawings and photographs that depict topics of children's interest to boost planning and conversation.
- **Create a print-rich setting.** Include labels for play areas, materials, and props. Label spaces and clear containers where materials are stored. Include labels and captions in home languages.

- **Use picture maps and graphic organizers.** Picture maps organize children's ideas and helps them see how things relate. They can contribute facts and ideas and then group them into like categories. For example, collies, poodles, and beagles are kinds of dogs. Dogs, cats, fish, and gerbils are animals we care for as pets. This kind of learning starts with specific examples and that generate a big idea or concept. If you ask, "How do we help our families?" – this kind of learning starts with the concept of helping and then children generate specific examples.
- **Encourage small-group storytelling.** Ask children to make up and retell stories (Flynn 2016). To encourage storytelling, ask children to explain their art work. Ask them to tell stories about family experiences. Invite children to make up alternative endings to books you have read together. Brainstorm fanciful tales where characters do impossible things. Write a group story on a large paper chart and children contribute "what happened next" sentences. Story telling is a wonderful way to learn about children and share the joy of writing and communicating.

Tips for Teaching: **Write great lesson plans you can really use!**

PLAY-BASED LESSON PLAN EXAMPLE: Architecture and construction

New York Early Learning Standards:
B.5. Initiative: Finds and uses materials to follow through on an idea (e.g., blocks for building a tower)
C.4. Persists in trying to complete a task after previous attempts have failed (e.g., complete a puzzle, build a tower)
C.2 Critical and Analytic Thinking: Uses information gained through one modality and applies it to new context via another modality (e.g., tries to build a tower of blocks like the one seen in a book)
G.3. Number Sense and Operations: Understands that numbers represent quantity (e.g., gets three apples out of the box
I.1-5. Properties of Ordering: Children identify and label shapes
D.1-9. Grammar and Syntax: Uses prepositions in everyday language (e.g., at, in, under).
E.4. Comprehension: Engages in conversations that develop a thought or idea (e.g., tells about a past event).

Concepts and big ideas
- People build places to live, work, and help their community (e.g., fire houses, hospitals, libraries, schools, playgrounds).
- People build with materials (e.g., bricks, wood, stones, glass).
- People design and draw plans before they build.
- People design to fit a specific space and purpose (e.g., skyscrapers, low, flat buildings, barns, ship and airplane hangars).
- People cooperate with others (e.g., plumbers, brick layers, glass installers, and electricians) to complete a building project.

Academic vocabulary

- Design, connect, compare, construct, plan, measure, predict, trace, measure, balance, install, solve.

Content vocabulary

- Feature, structure, base, space, beam, column, ceiling, foundation, triangle, square, wall, materials, position words (e.g., over, under, next to, between),

Architecture and construction books

- Billions of Bricks, by Curt Cyrus
- Building a House, by Byron Barton
- Construction Workers, by Cari Meister
- Construction Workers Help, by Tami Deedrick
- Iggy Peck, Architect, by Andrea Beaty
- Jack the Builder, by Stuart J. Murphy
- Look at that Building: A First Book of Structures, by Scot Richie
- Made by Maxine, by Ruth Spiro
- Rosie Revere, Engineer, by Andrea Beaty
- Same, Same but Different, Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw
- What Can You Do with a Toolbox? by Anthony Carrino andohn Colaneri

Materials to include in dramatic play

- Construction worker vests, tools, tool boxes or belts, helmets, safety glasses, maps, safety tape, retractable measuring tapes, gloves, signs, a clipboard with graph paper, rulers, pencils, camera, informational books, construction materials.

Thought questions and prompts:

- Tell me about your design.
- What do you need to do first, next, last?
- Who will use your building?
- What features will you design?
- What tools do you need to use?
- How does that work?
- What community workers will help you?
- What do you think? What do you think will happen?
- How will you make it fit? (balance, taller, larger, smaller)
- What will you do next?
- How can you solve that problem?
- What will go over, under, next to, in between?

Integrated activities:

- Mathematics: Measure items in the classroom with a measuring tape.
- Music and movement: This is the way we pound a nail (saw the wood, drill a hole, use a screwdriver) early in the morning song.
- Phonemic awareness and phonics: C says “K” as in construction, classroom, community, connect, cap, cart, color, compare.
- Reading: See book list.

- Science: Exploring natural construction materials (e.g., sand, pebbles, stones, rocks, wood, glass, silk) made by animals, from the earth and from plants.
- Social skills/Self-regulation: Solving problems. 1. What's the problem? 2. What's a good solution? (Try it.) 3. Did it work? 4. What else do you want to know/do?
- Visual arts: Painting a variety of building types from photographs.

Documentation and Assessment: Checklist for Learning with Observational Notes

Name: Sara Smith	Date: 12-5-19 Observational Notes
B.5. Initiative: Finds and uses materials to follow through on an idea	Sara secured and replaced blocks for her structure. She drew the building first on a clipboard and planned blocks before building. See attached photo and caption.
C.4. Persists in trying to complete a task after previous attempts have failed	Twice, Sara's tower crashed. She patiently planned to rebuild and described reasons the tower fell. "I put the round blocks too far over. I have to put them in the middle."
C.2 Critical and Analytic Thinking: Uses information gained through one modality and applies it to new context via another modality	Identified tower in *Bob Builds* and used pattern as basis for her drawing and building.
G.3. Number Sense and Operations: Understands that numbers represent quantity	Counted twenty square and ten rectangular blocks for structure.
I.1-5. Properties of Ordering: Children identify and label shapes	Described triangle, rectangle, and square using attributes.
D.1-9. Grammar and Syntax: Uses prepositions in everyday language	Used "at, in, under, beside, next to" when describing structure.
E.4. Comprehension: Engages in conversations that develop a thought or idea	Explained visit to New York City. Drew sky scrapers with interior elevator. Described sequence of entering, finding elevator, and riding to top. Compared ride to climbing stairs.

Reflection Questions

1. What part of your current lesson planning is working well?

2. What would you like change or improve?

3. What new learning themes would you like to introduce? What types of play props and collections would support that theme?

4. As you think about the possible scenarios and sequences for teaching approaches, what new teaching strategies would you like to use?

5. What else would you like your children to know and be able to do? What books, props, and activities will strengthen their skills?