



EARLY LEARNING CONNECTIONS

*SERVING ARMSTRONG, BEAVER, BUTLER,
INDIANA & LAWRENCE COUNTIES*

Road to School Readiness 2023-2024



The mission of Early Learning Connections is to provide a variety of high-quality early learning programs that foster a safe and positive culture through kindness and respect to meet the comprehensive needs of families.

The Vision of Early Learning Connections is to be the leading provider of children's programs and quality services for families.

Supporting Early Learning Connections School Readiness Goals through Effective Teaching Practices

The guiding principles of the Framework have been fundamental to the Head Start program from its inception. They underlie the program policies and practices that prepare young children for success in school and beyond.

- **Each child is unique and can succeed.** Children are individuals with different rates and paths of development. Each child is uniquely influenced by their prenatal environment, temperament, physiology, and life experiences. With the appropriate support, all children can be successful learners and achieve the skills, behaviors, and knowledge described in the Framework.
- **Learning occurs within the context of relationships.** Caring families, teachers, and other adults matter in a young child's life. Responsive and supportive interactions with adults are essential to children's learning.
- **Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates.** Families must be respected and supported as the primary influence in their child's early learning and education. Their knowledge, skills, and cultural backgrounds contribute to children's school readiness.
- **Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure.** Nurturing, responsive, and consistent care helps create safe environments where children feel secure and valued. In these settings, children are able to engage fully in learning experiences.
- **Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time.** Any single skill, behavior, or ability may involve multiple areas of development. For example, as infants gain fine motor skills, they can manipulate objects in new ways and deepen their understanding of cause and effect. As preschoolers gain new verbal skills, they can better manage their emotions and form more complex friendships.
- **Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow.** Children are active, engaged, and eager learners. Good teaching practices build on these intrinsic strengths by providing developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunities for exploration and meaningful play.
- **Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.** Responsive and respectful learning environments welcome children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Effective teaching practices and learning experiences build on the unique backgrounds and prior experiences of each child.

Infant/Toddler School Readiness At a Glance

Central Domains					
Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Literacy	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development
School Readiness Goals	<p>-Children will manage feelings, emotions, actions and behaviors with support of familiar adults.</p> <p>-Infants and Toddlers will increase their ability to be persistent and attentive.</p>	<p>-Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults.</p> <p>-Children will recognize and interpret emotions of others, including expressing care and concern for others, with support of familiar adults.</p>	<p>-Children will attend to, understand, respond and learn communication and language from others.</p> <p>-Children will understand and use an increasing number of words for communication, including expressing wants and needs, and engage in conversations with others.</p> <p>-Children will attend to, repeat and use rhymes and refrains from stories and songs.</p>	<p>-Children will actively explore their environment to discover what objects and people do, how things work, and how to make things happen.</p> <p>-Children will use a variety of strategies to solve problems, including reasoning and planning ahead.</p>	<p>-Children will develop and demonstrate use of large muscles for movement, exploration of the environment and self-help.</p> <p>-Children will develop and demonstrate control of small muscles for exploration, play and daily routines</p>
Preschool	<p>Teaching Strategies GOLD</p> <p>1a: Manages feelings</p> <p>1b: Follows limits and expectations</p> <p>11a: Attends and engages</p> <p>11b: Persists</p> <p>11c: Shows curiosity and motivation</p> <p>Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework</p> <p>IT-ATL 1</p> <p>IT-ATL 2</p> <p>IT-ATL 3</p> <p>IT-ATL 4</p> <p>PA Early Learning Standards</p> <p>5.1.A</p> <p>5.2.b</p> <p>AL.1.A</p> <p>AL.2.A</p> <p>AL.4.c</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies GOLD</p> <p>2a: Forms relationships with adults</p> <p>2b: Responds to emotional cues</p> <p>2c: Interacts with peers</p> <p>Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework</p> <p>IT-SE 1</p> <p>IT-SE 2</p> <p>IT-SE7</p> <p>IT-SE 8</p> <p>PA Early Learning Standards</p> <p>6.1.D</p> <p>16.1.B</p> <p>16.2.A</p> <p>16.2.D</p> <p>AL.1.C</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies GOLD</p> <p>8a: Comprehends language</p> <p>8b: Follows directions</p> <p>9a: Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary</p> <p>9b: Speaks clearly 9b</p> <p>9c: Uses conventional grammar</p> <p>10a: Engages in conversations</p> <p>12a: Recognizes and recalls</p> <p>12b: Make connections</p> <p>Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework</p> <p>IT-LC 1</p> <p>IT-LC 7</p> <p>IT-LC 8</p> <p>IT-SE3</p> <p>IT-LC 9</p> <p>PA Early Learning Standards</p> <p>1.2.J</p> <p>1.3.J</p> <p>1.5.C</p> <p>AL.2.B</p> <p>1.2.C</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies GOLD</p> <p>11a: Attends and engages</p> <p>11b: Persists</p> <p>11c: Solves problems</p> <p>11d: Shows curiosity and motivation</p> <p>11e: Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking</p> <p>Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework</p> <p>IT-C 1</p> <p>IT-C 6</p> <p>PA Early Learning Standards</p> <p>AL.1.A</p> <p>AL.2.A</p> <p>AL.2.B</p> <p>AL.2.C</p> <p>AL.3.C</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies GOLD</p> <p>4: Demonstrates traveling skills</p> <p>5: Demonstrates balancing skills</p> <p>6: Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills</p> <p>7a: Uses fingers and hands</p> <p>7b: Uses writing and drawing tools</p> <p>Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework</p> <p>IT-PMP 3</p> <p>IT-PMP 4</p> <p>IT-PMP 7</p> <p>PA Early Learning Standards</p> <p>10.4.A</p> <p>10.4.B</p> <p>10.5.A</p> <p>10.5.B</p> <p>10.5.C</p>

Approaches to Learning: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will manage feelings, emotions, actions and behaviors with support of familiar adults.	IT-ATL 1. Child manages feelings and emotions with support of familiar adults.	Social-Emotional 1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors a. Manages feelings b. Follows limits and expectations
	IT-ATL 2. Child manages actions and behavior with support of familiar adults.	
	PA Early Learning Standards 5.1.A 5.2.B	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Soothe young infants by voice and touch to help them reach a calmer state
- Identify and name emotions to help a child recognize and eventually use feelings vocabulary to talk about his emotional state.

Environment

- Observe children's use of toys and materials to make sure they are neither too simple nor too challenging, which may cause boredom or frustration. Make changes accordingly.
- Create an environment of "yes" to support children's emotional and behavioral self-regulation (e.g., safe and appropriate toys, materials, and equipment within children's reach; duplicates of favorite toys; enough space for active play; places for one or a few children)

Individualization

- Create a setting where all children have access to appropriate learning experiences.
- Recognize children's emotional cues and respond in ways that are effective for a given child.

Effective Practices

- Identify, acknowledge, and support self-soothing behaviors (e.g., "Would you like to hold your blanket? That always seems to make you feel calmer.").
- Anticipate infants' needs and respond as soon as you can. Describe the child's feelings, what you are doing, and what will happen next in a soothing (e.g., "Are you hungry? After I put Jamal in his crib, I'll get your bottle ready. Then we'll sit together in the rocking chair while you drink.").
- Prepare toddlers for transitions between activities by giving a five-minute warning and letting them know what will happen next (e.g., that it will soon be time to clean up).
- Give toddlers simple choices like, "You may have apple slices or orange." Make sure the choices you offer are ones that are acceptable no matter which one the child chooses.
- Allow children time to work through their emotions with your help. Give them words to express their feelings (e.g., "You don't like when mommy leaves. You cry because you're sad to see her go. Mommy will be back. Then you'll smile and be happy.").
- Comment on toddlers' attempts to handle a challenging situation (e.g., "I know how much you were looking forward to playing outside today. But when you saw it was raining, you and Nico played with puzzles instead. What a great thing to do on a rainy day!")

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's cognitive self-regulation skills is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

- Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Below are some practices that support infants' and toddlers' emotional and behavioral self-regulation.¹
- Describe and maintain realistic developmentally and culturally appropriate expectations for children's emotional and behavioral self-regulation.
- Help infants regulate their emotions by positively soothing, distracting, or engaging.
- Support toddlers in learning to regulate their emotions by commenting on their emotional state and offering strategies for calming themselves (e.g., getting their comfort object, looking at a family photo, or singing a favorite song).
- Identify children's emotional and behavioral "triggers" (e.g., objects, people, situations that can cause stress and lead to a negative reaction) and seek to minimize them.
- For example, anticipate situations that will be stressful for children (e.g., too frustrating) and manage the amount of stress or prepare children for the situation. You may also help children identify and avoid overly stressful situations.
- Be sensitive to how tired or overly excited children are and change the pace of the activity or interaction accordingly.
- Recognize that "quiet alert" states are cues and may be the optimal times for engaging infants.
- In home-based programs, consider identifying and including broader relationship-building practices such as those described in *Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families* [PDF, 870KB].
- Create an action plan with timelines to help you use the practices consistently and effectively.

Approaches to Learning: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Infants and Toddlers will increase their ability to be persistent and attentive.	IT-ATL 3. Child maintains focus and sustains attention with support.	Cognitive 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning a. Attends and engages b. Persists c. Shows curiosity and motivation
	IT-ATL 4. Child develops the ability to show persistence in actions and behaviors.	
	PA Early Learning Standards AL.1.A AL.2.A AL.4.C	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Model flexibility and persistence.
- Promote sustained joint attention with children. Joint attention is when an adult and child both pay attention to an object or action. It happens when the adult or child alerts each other to an object or action by looking, pointing, or other non-verbal or verbal means.

Environment

- Follow a predictable schedule so children gain a general idea of what will happen at different times of the day. Make sure to announce and help children manage transitions.
- Provide equipment, materials, and time for children to play age-appropriate game.

Individualization

- Notice, support, and respond to children's interests flexibly.
- Express confidence in a child's ability to successfully accomplish a goal or task.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families'

- Provide a variety of interesting, culturally- and age-appropriate toys and materials to explore.
- When interacting with young infants, give them one or two toys or materials at a time to play with. Switch the materials when you notice children losing interest.
- Allow children to use toys and materials in their own ways and repeat actions and activities.
- Play simple games that involve repetition, such as peek-a-boo.
- Describe what children see, hear, and do. For toddlers, interpret and expand on what they do and say.
- For example, if a child says "Daddy truck," you might say, "You drove to school in daddy's truck? What did you like about being in daddy's truck?"
- Ask open-ended questions such as, "How did you do that? Tell me more."
- Use children's names to get their attention (e.g., "Katie, do you see that bird?").
- Use simple statements to let children know that you see how they feel (e.g., "I can see how frustrating that is for you. You are really working hard to figure that out.").
- Help children just enough to get them past where they are stuck.
- For example, if an infant is having trouble rolling from his back to his tummy, you might tuck the child's arm under his tummy to see if that helps, rather than turning him over all the way.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that help preschoolers develop healthy relationships with important adults in their lives:

- Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Below are some practices that support infants' and toddlers' cognitive self-regulation skills.
- Use verbal and nonverbal strategies to follow children's interests and ideas and provide encouragement.
- Provide access to different types of objects and positioning infants and toddlers in ways that allow them to explore objects to help them learn about the world.
- Extend children's play by demonstrating other ways to use or move objects, calling attention to their attributes, properties, and functions, and gradually combining them. Play games that help children focus and sustain their attention (e.g., hide and find games like peek-a-boo, imitation games like follow-the-leader, and fingerplays and songs with hand gestures or body movements).
- Use different strategies to help children simplify the problem, such as providing a variety of types of cues (e.g., verbal, visual, modeling, physical) and encouraging children's attempts to solve problems.
- Encourage children to keep trying to solve a problem and follow through to make sure the child is successful.
- Provide specific feedback to children to help them repeat their success or alter what they do so that they are more successful.
- Adjust the amount of support you give, providing prompts and support as needed. For young non-mobile infants, most problem-solving will involve learning how to control their bodies and move in space (e.g., rolling an infant onto her side so that she can roll the rest of the way over).
- When conflict occurs, support child-directed solutions instead of solving problems for the children (e.g., offer different strategies such as finding a different but similar toy or taking turns).

Social Emotional: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults.	IT-SE 1. Child develops expectations of consistent, positive interactions through secure relationships with familiar adults. IT-SE 2. Child uses expectations learned through repeated experiences in primary relationships to develop relationships with other adults. PA Early Learning Standards AL.1.C	Social-Emotional 2. Established and sustains positive relationships c. Forms relationships with adults

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Respond to children's positive and negative emotions in ways that let children know their feelings are important.
- Convey warmth and affection toward children by smiling, laughing, showing empathy, and using gentle, nurturing touch.

Environment

- Stay aware of children's needs by consistently scanning the setting and responding when children need help.
- Provide quiet and active areas stocked with materials children may use on their own, all the while being ready to join a child who indicates interest in the adult's participation.

Individualization

- Wait for a child's response to a verbal or nonverbal communication before acting and vary responses to match or adapt to those of the child.
- Use children's names with a positive comment, look children in the eye (if culturally appropriate) and listen carefully during a conversation, and follow their interests with actions, words, and new ideas.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families'

- Check in with children visually and verbally when you're occupied with something else. Use a smile or a comment such as, "I see you over there. Are you getting hungry?," as a reminder that you're connected.
- Talk to children as you're going about daily tasks like diapering or providing snacks. Pause to allow them a turn in the conversation, which will progress from gesturing and cooing to sounds, words, phrases, and complete sentences as children get older.
- Provide a routine or cue so children know what to expect. Describe what's happening now and what will happen next.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that support preschoolers' emotional functioning:

- Here are some practices that help infants and toddlers develop healthy relationships with important adults in their lives:
 - Use children's names in a positive context.
 - Talk with children at eye level, as culturally appropriate.
 - Use non-verbal strategies for comfort and support; as culturally appropriate for each child. For example:
 - Hugging, stroking, holding, or rocking the child, Gently placing a hand on or patting the child, Allowing children to sit close, Smiling, Using kind and calm tones
 - Listen carefully to what children say and demonstrate interest in verbal and non-verbal ways.
 - Comment on what children are doing and saying.
 - Play responsive social games with children (e.g., peek-a-boo).
 - Consistently scan the room and respond when children need help.
 - Acknowledge children's temperamental traits (e.g., "I know you like to watch for a while before trying something new.").
 - Wait for children to respond to a verbal or nonverbal communication before acting. Match your response to the child's emotions.
 - Adapt your schedule, behavior, energy level, and pace of interaction in response to child's state, emotional expression, and/or temperament.
 - Prepare and inform children about transitions and facilitate rituals for routines (e.g., eating, sleeping, arriving, departing, diapering, toileting, dressing). Provide information to parents about why rituals are important.
 - Spend one-on-one time with each child in your primary care.

Social Emotional: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will recognize and interpret emotions of others, including expressing care and concern for others, with the support of familiar adults.	IT-SE 7. Child recognizes and interprets emotions of others with the support of familiar adults. IT-SE 8. Child expresses care and concern toward others.	Social-Emotional 2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships b. Responds to emotional cues c. Interacts with peers
	PA Early Learning Standards 16.2.A 16.2.D AL.1.C	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Tell children what is going to happen in advance to prepare them for changes and transitions.
- Accept and name children's strong feelings while offering ways to manage them.

Environment

- Design the environment to maximize positive behaviors and minimize behaviors that cause problems.
- Offer materials that encourage children to manage, express, and discuss their feelings and those of others.

Individualization

- Step in to help children learn how to handle disagreements.
- Change an activity when a child seems tired, overly excited, or distressed.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families'

- Make feelings part of your everyday conversation with an infant or very young child. "Listen to the sound your rattle makes. Do you like that? You do!" or "I know you don't like feeling cold and wet. Let's get you a fresh, clean diaper."
- Validate both positive and negative emotions. "Lisette, you built a tall tower! The smile on your face shows me you're proud." "Josh, I know you're upset because it's time to come in. You love being outside! Can you help me put your coat and mittens away so they're ready for next time?"
- Describe what you're seeing and doing when a child is upset so children can learn to recognize these cues and offer similar comfort. "Tarik bumped his knee and he's crying. Let's get him some ice to put on his boo-boo."
- Offer options when a child is upset, such as a blanket, a hug, or a quiet place to regroup. Describe what's happening by saying things like, "A quiet place makes it easier to calm down," so children can begin to understand the strategies that work for them.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that support infants' and toddlers' emotional functioning:²

- Be sensitive and empathetic.
- Monitor children's emotions and expression of emotion.
- Share positive emotion with children by smiling and laughing with them, sharing enjoyment and interest.
- Help infants to regulate by soothing or distracting them or engaging them more positively.
- Support toddlers in learning to manage their own emotions by commenting on their emotional state and offering strategies for calming themselves.
- Identify children's emotional and behavioral "triggers" (e.g., objects, people, or situations that can cause stress and lead to a negative reaction) and seek to minimize them. For example, anticipate situations that will be stressful or frustrating for children and manage the amount of stress or prepare children for the situation. You may also help children identify and avoid overly stressful situations.
- Be sensitive to children's fatigue and excitement levels and change the pace of the activity accordingly.
- Recognize that "quiet alert" states are cues and may be the optimal times for engaging infants.
- Talk about peers as people with feelings.
- Talk about the perspectives of others to help children understand that other children have feelings and these feelings may differ from the child's.

Language and Literacy: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will attend to, understand, respond and learn communication and language from others.	IT-LC 1. Child attends to, understands, and responds to communication and language from others. PA Early Learning Standards 1.5.C	Language 8. Listens and understands increasingly complex language a. Comprehends language b. Follows directions

Teaching Practices

When talking or signing with children, use their home or tribal language if you are able. Use labels, signs, and posters in children's home and tribal languages, as appropriate.

Interactions

- Attend to an infant's verbal and non-verbal communications and respond with words and facial expressions to continue a back-and-forth-exchange.
- Use questions and short comments to encourage toddlers' thinking and language learning.

Environment

- Arrange the space so there are comfortable places to engage children in conversations while carrying out routines.
- Offer a collection of board and washable books that feature pictures of familiar objects and experiences, and introduce simple stories in English and the children's home or tribal languages.

Individualization

- Create and read books using photos of children and their families.
- Talk with children about their own experiences and in response to their interests.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Use as much of the child's home or tribal language as possible. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Acknowledge a baby's smiles and babbles and respond to her sounds and movements with your own (e.g., "You like the rattle! Can you touch it?").
- Narrate caregiving activities; for example:
- Now, let's get you a fresh, clean diaper. We'll tape this side closed—boop! And now the other side—boop! Can you stand up so I can pull up your pants? Thanks. You are good to go.
- Follow the child's lead, describing the things in which he's interested.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that support preschoolers' emotional functioning:³

- Respond contingently to a child's social cues, including both verbal and non-verbal requests for attention, sharing of successes, and disengagement when the child needs time to regroup.
- Individualize responses to a child's signals.
- Use a variety of ways of interacting (e.g., verbal, physical, redirection).
- Respond flexibly to multiple children's bids for attention.
- Encourage and engage in reciprocal interactions with children (e.g., exchange facial expressions, gestures, signs, vocalizations, and words with the child).
- Acknowledge when children show they understand verbal and non-verbal communication.
 - Children may show they understand through gestures, facial expressions, signs, words, and actions such as looking at people or objects being referenced.
- Wait and watch for a child's response to comments and questions before responding.
- Follow up if children do not respond to a question.
- These practices may also be used to support dual language learners (DLLs) in developing their home language and to expose them to English. For more information, see:
- The Planned Language Approach: Big 5 for ALL materials:
 - Oral Language and Vocabulary
 - Background Knowledge
- [Specific Strategies to Support DLLs When Adults Do Not Speak Their Language](#)

Language and Communication: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will understand and use an increasing number of words for communication, including expressing wants and needs, and engage in conversation with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT-LC 7. Child understands an increasing number of words used in communication with others. • IT-LC 8. Child uses an increasing number of words in communication and conversation with others. • IT-SE 3. Child learns to use adults as a resource to meet needs. 	Literacy 15. Demonstrates phonological awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Notices and discriminates rhyme b. Notices and discriminates alliterations c. Notices and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound (4 year olds)
	PA Early Learning Standards 1.1.C	

Teaching Practices

To lead phonological awareness experiences, you need to know the sounds and sound combinations of a language very well. Only lead phonological awareness experiences in languages in which you are fluent.

Interactions

- Provide the words for objects and other things and repeat them often.
- Build on children's language using vocabulary the children may not know yet.

Environment

- Provide a language-rich environment.
- Update dramatic play props to reflect children's current interests and experiences.

Individualization

- Tailor requests and directions to the child's age and stage of development.
- Help a child learn the words used to express feelings and desires.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Use as much of the child's home or tribal language as possible. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Label objects and actions verbally or using sign language.
- Prompt children to point to, verbalize, or sign the names of objects and actions.
- Narrate your own actions while they are happening (self-talk) and narrate children's actions while they are happening (parallel talk).
- Use a variety of specific and descriptive words and "map" these words onto concepts that children already know.
 - For example, while serving melon at snack time, mention that this is a kind of melon called a cantaloupe, and that yesterday's snack was a different kind of melon called a honeydew. Descriptive words for melons might include color (e.g., orange, green) and taste (e.g., sweet, juicy).
- Sometimes pair a word you know in the child's home language with a word in English (e.g., "Here is your pañal—your diaper.") to show the connection between the two words.
- Speak in complete sentences and vary the types of sentences (e.g., short, long) used throughout the day.
- Talk about things that are not present or visible in the room (e.g., related to things in the past, present, or future, or pretend events/role-playing). For example:
 - "Yesterday, you ate all your oatmeal."
 - "What did you see when you went to the beach with your nana?"

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that help infants and toddlers understand and use an increasing number of words in communication and conversation with others.

- Use a variety of specific and descriptive words in context, including some challenging (e.g., new or novel) words.
- Specific and descriptive words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that add richness to language or are words children may not hear every day.
- Frequently name objects and actions, and sometimes ask children to label them on their own.
- Use books, songs, poems, and fingerplays to expose children to specific, descriptive, and challenging words. Explain what words mean if children are not familiar with them.
- For DLLs, learn from children's families how to sing favorite songs or lullabies. Learn how to pronounce and use important words, such as "milk," "sleep," and other comfort words and phrases, in children's home languages even if you do not speak the language fluently.
- Use gestures or sign language while speaking.
- Notice and comment when children show they understand the meaning of a word and use new words or signs to communicate.
- These practices may also be used to support dual language learners (DLLs) in developing their home language and to expose them to English. For more information, see:
 - Background Knowledge
 - [Specific Strategies to Support DLLs When Adults Do Not Speak Their Language](#)
- Create an action plan with timelines to help you use the practices consistently and effectively.

Language and Communication: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will attend to, repeat and use some rhymes and refrains from stories and songs.	IT-LC 9. Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases or refrains from stories or songs. PA Early Learning Standards 1.2.J 1.3.J AL.2.B 1.2.C	Cognitive 12. Remembers and connects experiences a. Recognizes and recalls d. Makes connections Language 9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary b. Speaks clearly

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Ask families to share books, songs, and rhymes in home languages, tribal languages, and in English; use them often so children can master them.
- Encourage children to explore books and use drawing materials on their own and with adult assistance.

Environment

- Offer a wide variety of books and environmental print covering the languages, cultures, interests, and other unique characteristics of the children; display books in children's reach.
- Provide large pieces of paper and large crayons and markers so children can experience making their own marks.

Individualization

- Provide books and pictures related to a child's experience, such as learning to walk or being afraid of the dark.
- Make up and tell stories about a child or children in the group.

Print and Alphabet Knowledge Effective Practices

- Cuddle up to read. This shared experience helps children associate reading with pleasure.
- Point to the pictures in a book and label them, using facial expressions, varied vocal tones, and gestures to communicate the meaning of words.
- Reinforce the meaning of words by connecting them to children's real-life experiences at home, school, and in the community.
- Ask children questions about the pictures or plot of a book.
 - With infants, watch and listen for a response (e.g., vocalization, facial expression, body movement) before providing answers and comments.
 - For children 18 months and older, provide opportunities to complete predictable sentences or rhyming phrases while reading aloud. Make connections between the book and children's own lives.
- Tell children stories. Encourage more verbal children to tell stories.
- Use songs and fingerplays to model rhyming and enhance children's ability to predict what comes next in the song or fingerplay.
- Talk with children about how print is used around them. For example:
 - Point out signs and what they mean during walks
 - Explain what symbols mean on materials in the setting (e.g., empty food boxes used for pretend play)
- Provide time, safe and appropriate materials, and space for mark-making experiences, such as scribbling, drawing, and painting. These experiences can be provided indoors and outdoors.
- Model writing for different reasons. Explain what you are writing and why you are writing.

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that support infants' and toddlers' emerging literacy skills. [1]

- When sharing books with infants and toddlers, help the children to recognize and understand what is in the book by:
 - Pointing to pictures as they are named, Using facial expressions, vocal tones, and gesturing to illustrate the meaning of words, Allowing children to turn pages, Asking children closed- and open-ended questions about the pictures or story, Encouraging children to complete a sentence in a predictable or rhyming story, Helping children make connections to the story or book, Demonstrating interest in the book
- Use many different kinds words (e.g., objects, actions, feelings, categories) to connect children to objects, events, and ideas in the book.
- Use sentences and narratives that help children understand stories and relationships between objects and events or how ideas are organized.
- Foster positive attitudes toward reading by holding or cuddling with children when books are read.
- Encourage children to participate by asking questions, using intonation, etc.
- Provide easy, daily access to a variety of books, including those in children's home or tribal languages (e.g., books about familiar and unusual topics, books that are lyrical, books that name only pictures, books that include stories).
- Encourage children to handle books.
- Point out and talk about the meaning of labels, signs, logos, and other symbols in the environment or setting.
- Provide opportunities for children to show they understand what familiar labels, signs, logos, and other symbols mean.
- Provide children writing materials and support for using them. These practices may also be used to support DLLs in continuing to develop their home language and to acquire English. For more information, see:
 - The [Planned Language Approach: Big 5 for ALL](#) materials:
- Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing
- Book Knowledge and Print Concepts
- [Specific Strategies to Support DLLs When Adults Do Not Speak Their Language](#)

Cognition: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will actively explore their environment to discover what objects and people do, how things work, and how to make things happen.	IT-C 1. Child actively explores people and objects to understand self, others and objects.	Cognitive 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attends and engages b. Persists d. Shows curiosity and motivation
	PA Early Learning Standards AL.1.A AL.2.A AL.2.C	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Promote infants' explorations of their world using their senses.
- Describe children's actions and the effects of their actions on objects and people (cause and effect).

Environment

- Display and store toys and play materials on low, open shelves so children can make choices about what to explore and return items when done.
- Offer a wide variety and range of toys and materials that are safe, culturally appropriate, and open-ended.

Individualization

- Promote children's independent exploration of toys, materials, and the people in the setting.
- Observe and step in to offer verbal and non-verbal information and guidance to support concept development.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Provide open-ended materials that can be used in a variety of ways, such as blocks, empty containers and boxes, and nesting cups.
- Provide toys and materials that support children's exploration with cause and effect (e.g., musical instruments; windsocks and chimes; toys with elements that produce results, such as knobs that twist to make a sound, levers that slide to open and close, and latches that open or close a door or lid).
- Promote infants' exploration using their senses—hearing, touching and feeling different textures, seeing, smelling, and tasting.²
- Show children different and new ways of moving and playing with objects and toys by describing what to try, using gestures, and modeling different strategies. Let children explore the new and different ways on their own.
- For infants, support exploration using strategies like putting your hands over the child's hands or arm to help her move the object or toy. You can also attach objects to a young infant's arm or leg or put an object or toy within his reach so he will knock it when he moves and make something happen (cause and effect).
- Help children (even infants too young to answer) make sense of their experiences by describing what they see and do. Talk about cause and effect relationships that exist in their daily activities and play (e.g., "You drank the whole bottle. Now the bottle is empty!" and "When you rolled the ball and it bumped into the block tower, the block tower fell down."). Ask open-ended questions such as, "I wonder why ...?" "What do you think will happen if ...?" "What else can you try?"⁴
- Wait and watch for cues (e.g., body movements, gestures, facial expressions, using sign language, words, phrases) before responding.
- Call children's attention to attributes and properties of objects and toys they explore (e.g., function, texture, color, shape, sound, size, letters, and numbers). Use spatial and concept words such as up/down, top/bottom, on/off, and in/out. Model actions physically; for example, saying, "You put the red block on top of the blue block," while pointing to or tapping the top of the block structure.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that support preschoolers' emotional functioning:

- Position infants and toddlers in ways that allow them to explore objects.
- Extend children's play with objects (provides challenges).
- For example, demonstrate other ways to use or move objects, and gradually combine objects. Call children's attention to attributes and properties (e.g., texture, rolls/doesn't roll, size, what fits together or in something else) and function of objects (e.g., what objects do and what they are used for).
- Provide varied toys to allow children to explore (e.g., toys that go in and out, busy boxes, blocks, nesting cups). Scaffold children's explorations through positioning, modeling, or verbal support.
- Use a variety of strategies to arouse children's curiosity and interest in exploring objects and toys, and help children maintain interest these explorations. When choosing strategies to use, consider children's temperament (e.g., some children are hesitant about new experiences) and cultural background (e.g., in some cultures, watching first to learn and then trying to do something is the accepted way to learn).
- Make sure that available objects and toys are safe for children to explore. Monitor the environment to ensure the environment is safe for exploration.

Cognition: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will use a variety of strategies to solve problems, including reasoning and planning ahead.	IT-C 6. Child learns to use a variety of strategies in solving problems.	Cognitive 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attends and engages b. Persists c. Solves problems d. Shows curiosity and motivation e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
	PA Early Learning Standards AL.1.A AL.2.B AL.2.C AL.3.C	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Let children know that their problem-solving attempts and successes are valued.
- Make comments and ask questions that help children predict, explain, and reason about their world and the people in it.

Environment

- Offer new materials that offer challenges without causing frustration.
- Provide materials children need to be successful, like child-size tools or a magnifying glass with a large lens and a sturdy handle.

Individualization

- Give a child plenty of time to solve a problem independently before stepping in to offer suggestions.
- Observe and recognize when a child is frustrated and needs adult assistance to solve a problem.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Support young infants as they learn to control their body movements and become mobile.
- For example, scaffold an infant's ability to roll by lying close to him on the floor and encouraging him with words and physical support, if needed to roll toward you.
- Help infants and toddlers predict, explain, and reason about the people and the world around them (e.g., ask a child what he thinks a caregiver is going to do as she walks across the play area into the kitchen).
- Prompt toddlers through problem solving as needed (e.g., "Clara, I see that you are struggling with that shape sorter. I wonder what else you could try to make that oval fit. What if you try turning the piece around?").
- Comment on toddlers' successful problem-solving strategies (e.g., "Manuel, I noticed that you walked around Eva and Marco's floor puzzle to get to the book shelf. Good thinking.").
- Encourage toddlers to persist in their attempts to solve simple problems (e.g., "Jacob, I see that you are working to make those shapes fit into the sorter. You're trying them in different positions. Turning the shapes around is a good idea. Keep trying. You've almost got it!").
- Point out problems and how they get solved in stories and real life (e.g., When reading books, pose questions about the characters such as, "How do you think the bunny will get to that yummy carrot?"). When real-life problems come up, describe the problems and suggest solutions for very young or non-verbal children. Invite verbal children to suggest solutions.
- Talk through your own discovery of a solution so that children become aware of how to think through problems and solutions.
- For example, if you have more children than crackers for snack time, you might say, "Oh no, we have eight children and only seven crackers left. That's not enough crackers! What can we do? Maybe instead of crackers for snack today, we can have sliced cucumbers."

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that help infants and toddlers develop reasoning and problem-solving skills:

- Use different strategies to support problem-solving, such as simplifying problems, providing a variety of types of cues (e.g., verbal, visual, modeling, physical), and encouraging children's attempts.
- Individualize strategies to support problem-solving rather than using the same strategies with all children. Change the strategy if it does not work rather than repeating the same unsuccessful strategy.
- Ensure that children end with success so that they are motivated to continue to work on problem-solving.
- Provide specific feedback to children to help them repeat their success or alter what they do so that they are more successful.
- Encourage children to persist and follow through to ensure the child's success.
- Model positive approaches to solving problems.
- Provide new challenges and balance challenge and support (e.g., provide a new toy or puzzle to solve; ask a "What would happen if ...?" question; invent a simple problem for children to solve, such as "Which of our friends is missing from school today?" while using a picture list of children in the group). Intervene before a child becomes too frustrated.
- In home-based programs, effective practices may also include broader relationship-building practices such as those described in Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families

Perceptual Motor and Physical Development: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will develop and demonstrate use of large muscles for movement, exploration of the environment and self-help.	IT-PMP 3. Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles for movement and position.	Physical 4. Demonstrates traveling skills 5. Demonstrates balancing skills 6. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
	IT-PMP 4. Child demonstrates effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.	
	PA Early Learning Standards 10.4.A 10.4.B	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Engage children in experiences that support gross motor skills.
- Demonstrate successful strategies for gaining certain gross motor skills.

Environment

- Create a setting in which children can move their bodies safely while being challenged to enhance gross motor skills.
- Place safe toys and play materials where children can see and reach for them.

Individualization

- Suggest a strategy or approach that will allow a child to experience success in accomplishing a gross motor task or challenge.
- Respect a child's individual pace for developing gross motor skills.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Provide infants with plenty of time and freedom to move, like placing a young infant on his back on a flat surface. Describe to the baby what he sees and does with his body (e.g., "See how your legs move up and down?").
- Minimize the amount of time children spend in equipment such as car seats, bouncers, baby swings, and other equipment that restrict infants' movements.
- Provide frequent opportunities for "tummy time" for nonmobile infants. Talk to infants about what you see them do with their heads, arms, torsos, and legs. Provide interesting toys and materials for infants to look at and reach for while they are on their tummy.
- Provide safe, sturdy equipment children can use without assistance (e.g., small stools or chairs, foam furniture covered in vinyl, low steps covered with carpet) and encourage self-directed movement. For example, rather than lifting a child and putting her in a small chair, wait while the child gets into it on her own. Comment on what you see the child do and offer positive encouragement.
- Provide a variety of toys and materials that help children develop their gross motor skills (e.g., push and pull toys, balls of various sizes, riding toys, large, sturdy cardboard boxes or plastic bins that children can climb in and out of). Comment on what you see the child doing and offer positive encouragement.
- Be attentive and emotionally and physically available as children move away to explore and return to you.
- Establish times to play music and participate in games such as "Hokey Pokey" or "Ring Around the Rosie."
- Offer plenty of opportunities for movement and large motor play, indoors and outdoors, in safe but challenging spaces where children can move. For example:
- Infants who are not yet walking need space that is protected from foot traffic of older children, with differing levels to explore, such as small ramp or a few steps.
- Crawling babies need lots of room to move and floors that are free of small objects to mouth and that could be swallowed.
- Toddlers need lots of space for running, jumping, throwing, and using riding toys.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that help infants and toddlers develop gross motor skills:

- Describe how children use and move their bodies (e.g., arms, legs, torso) during play and routine care experiences.
- Provide frequent "tummy time" opportunities for nonmobile infants.
- Play interactive games and sing songs that encourage children to move their bodies.
- Provide a variety of toys, materials, and equipment that help children develop gross motor skills such as pulling to stand, balancing, walking, climbing in and out, jumping, and running.
- Provide safe spaces and opportunities during play and routine care, indoors and outdoors, for children to use and move their bodies.
- Adapt gross motor materials, equipment, and experiences to enable children with suspected delays, identified disabilities, or other special needs to participate. Talk with children's parents and specialists working with the child to get specific suggestions to meet each child's unique needs.

Perceptual Motor and Physical Development: Infant/Toddler

Goal	Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework Goal	Teaching Strategies GOLD
Children will develop and demonstrate control of small muscles for exploration, play and daily routines.	IT-PMP 7. Child uses hands for exploration, play and daily routines.	Physical 7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination a. Uses fingers and hands b. Uses writing and drawing tools
	PA Early Learning Standards 10.4.A 10.5.A 10.5.B 10.5.C	

Teaching Practices

Interactions

- Engage children in activities, routines, and experiences that support fine motor skills.
- Demonstrate successful strategies for gaining certain fine motor skills.

Environment

- Offer a variety of toys and materials that require fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Store clean-up and self-care materials within children's reach.

Individualization

- Make sure all children have access to the materials and experiences designed to promote fine motor skills.
- Respect a child's individual pace for developing fine motor skills.

Effective Practices

Try the following practices with infants and toddlers and preschool-aged children. Find out how home visitors can put these practices to work with families.

- Provide a variety of toys and materials that support fine motor development, such as:
 - Rattles and shakers, Stacking cups and rings, Clutch balls, Shape sorters, Playdough and molds for shaping, Simple puzzles with knobs, Large peg boards/pegs, Large beads and string, Wind-up toys, Blocks, Books (for turning pages, pointing to pictures), Writing tools, Paper for tearing
- Include everyday objects and materials such as boxes with lids that can be opened and closed; large empty water bottles that can be filled with clothespins or other small objects; tongs; and squirt bottles.
- Place toys and materials where children can easily reach them and offer many chances for children to explore them.
- Describe how children use their hands when reaching for, touching, grasping, and playing with toys and materials.
- Place objects (e.g., unbreakable mirror, musical shakers, large plastic beads to pull apart, soft dolls to mouth, feel, and squeeze) within a nonmobile infant's reach when he or she is sitting or lying down. Encourage the child to reach for the objects through verbal and physical support (e.g., placing object next to child's hand, gently moving child's hand toward the object).
- Demonstrate how to move objects closer using tools, such as a stick or pull-string.
- Use daily routines as opportunities to support children's fine motor skills development. For example:
 - Provide finger foods that allow infants to use and practice their pincer grasp. Offer spoons and forks to toddlers to practice eye-hand coordination. Encourage toddlers to pull the zipper up on their jackets to perfect their pincer grasp.
- Describe how children are using and moving their hands, fingers, and wrists during handwashing.
- Offer "just enough" help to toddlers who may show signs of frustration as they are mastering small motor skills (e.g., move the mouth of a container closer to a toddler's hand to help him put a bead into a jar). Encourage a child's efforts; for example, "You are working hard to pick that puzzle piece up and make it fit in the puzzle."
- Sing songs that have different hand motions, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "The Wheels on the Bus." Start slowly with younger children to give them time to try to control and coordinate movements.

Action Steps

Reflecting on and improving your skills and knowledge to support children's relationships with other children is important work. Here are some ideas you can try with your coach or supervisor to build your teaching practices in this area:

Planning Goals and Action Steps

Work with your coach or supervisor to identify the teaching practices you want to build and strengthen. Here are some practices that help infants and toddlers develop fine motor skills:

- Describe how children use their fingers, hands, and wrists when manipulating toys and materials, doing hand movements during songs and finger plays, and during routine care experiences.
- Provide opportunities for nonmobile infants to reach for, grasp, and hold objects.
- Play hand and fingerplay games with children.
- Provide access and chances to explore a variety of toys and materials that come apart and fit together, such as pop beads, large interlocking blocks, boxes and containers with lids, and simple puzzles.
- Play games that require hand-eye coordination (e.g., rolling and throwing balls).
- Provide access to and opportunities to use varied art materials, such as large crayons, markers, and paint brushes.
- Provide toddlers with opportunities for practicing zipping and buttoning.
- Adapt fine motor materials and experiences to enable children with suspected delays, identified disabilities, or other special needs to participate. Talk with children's parents and specialists working with the child to get specific suggestions to meet each child's unique needs.