



# Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VI, No. 1

## 10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ **Foster curiosity and development through play**
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

## This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

### Critical Thinking: An Important 21st Century Skill

Do you remember the 3 R's (Reading, writing and arithmetic)? Fifty years ago, these skills were considered crucial for success in life. However, according to *National Education Association's* report, "What was considered a good education 50 years ago is no longer enough for success in college, career and citizenship in the 21st century." The report goes on to identify 4 important skills, termed the "Four C's," that students will need in order to be successful in our modern world: *Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity*.

The *World Economic Forum* reports that 65% of children entering school today will end up working in completely new jobs that don't yet exist; future occupations will require a different skill set. There will be a huge emphasis to hire individuals who can:

- Think creatively;
- Work collaboratively with others;
- Communicate effectively with those of diverse cultural backgrounds; and
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills.

The good news is that these skills can be taught beginning very early in life! In fact, the early years are the best time to begin giving children experiences that help them develop these skills.

In this newsletter, we will focus on one of these skills – **critical thinking**. Critical thinking is more than memorizing a list of facts; it is the ability to analyze, compare, contrast, and make sense of information in order to make good decisions and solve problems. This

important skill is used in everything from putting together puzzles to mapping out the best route to work. This newsletter will discuss how critical thinking develops and will provide tips and strategies for helping young children learn this skill at each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



## Infants

Babies are born with a drive to understand – to be curious about their surroundings. You may see this curiosity in the way the baby follows sounds, faces and interesting objects with his eyes, or reaches for and handles objects and bring them to his mouth. *This curiosity provides the foundation for critical thinking.* Before children can analyze, compare, contrast and make sense of information, they need opportunities to explore objects. Curiosity is what drives them to explore. It is important to keep in mind that this natural drive to be curious can be weakened or strengthened by how you respond to the baby's curiosity.

Paying attention to and nurturing the child's curiosity is one of the most important ways you can support his learning and development of critical thinking skills. Here are some strategies to nurture curiosity and critical thinking in infants:

- Use words to describe the infant's discoveries. For example, *"Did you hear that? It made a sound when you shook the rattle! Try it again!"*
- Watch the baby carefully. What is he trying to make happen? For example, is he trying to roll over to reach an interesting object? Encourage him to go as far as he can and then bring the object close enough that he can get it to explore.



## Toddlers

Toddlers are like little scientists. Their curiosity, combined with their increased mobility, leads them to “experiment” with (and to touch) just about everything they see. *Critical thinking develops during these “experimentations.”* For example, when he picks up a toy, then pulls, pushes, turns it, or throws it on the floor, he is discovering the object's properties; comparing and contrasting his discoveries; and making sense of the information he gains (for example he may discover, “when I throw the ball on the floor it goes back up; when I throw the spoon on the floor it stays down.”).

Here are some strategies to nurture critical thinking in toddlers:

- Narrate his explorations. Think of yourself as a sports announcer and give a play-by-play description of what your child is doing: For example, “You dumped out all of the water. Now the bucket is empty!” By giving children the words for their actions and the objects they are using, you are helping them understand cause and effect and how things work. You are building their vocabulary and critical thinking skills at the same time.

Join the child in his play and explorations, and use words such as “big” and “small,” “full” and “empty,” and “more” and “less”. Concepts such as these promote critical thinking.

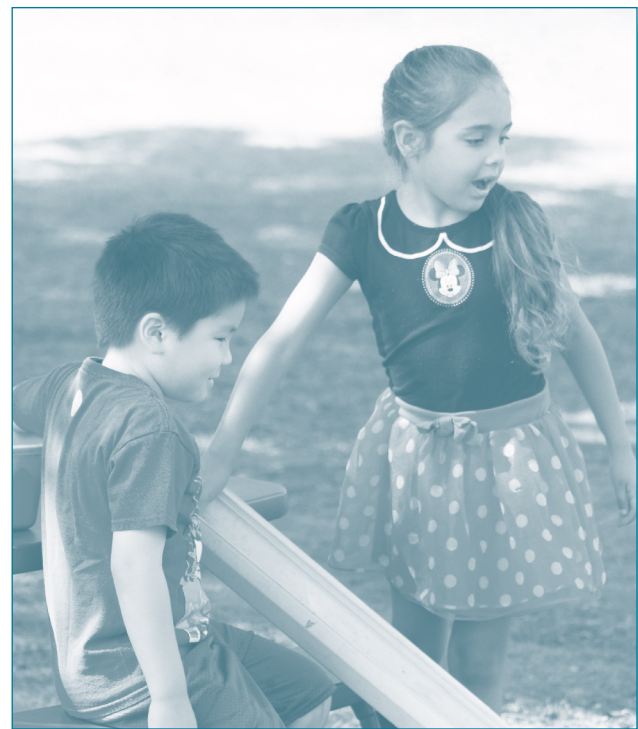


# Preschoolers

With an increased ability to think in a more complex way, preschoolers make exciting new discoveries about the world and come up with theories about how things work. For example, by experimenting with items that float and items that sink, a preschooler may theorize that heavy items sink in water, while lighter items float in water. *Critical thinking develops when preschoolers have opportunities to form theories.* And because preschoolers are naturally driven by the need to understand and to master information about their world, this is the perfect time to give them hands-on experiences that promote investigation, questioning, making predictions, and forming explanations about why things work the way they do.

Here are some strategies to nurture critical thinking in preschoolers:

- When a child shows genuine interest in something, take the time to acknowledge his curiosity and engage him in conversation about it. For example, if he looks intently at the sky whenever a plane flies over, ask him about his observations, and provide him experiences that help him learn more about airplanes: e.g., how to make a paper airplane, pretending to be planes, or borrow books from the library about airplanes.
- When the child runs into a problem (for example, his paper airplane doesn't fly far), instead of solving the problem for him, ask questions such as, "What have you tried?" and "What can you try that's different?"
- Give the child opportunities to make predictions. For example, ask "What do you think will happen if we put a paperclip on the tail (or other parts) of your paper airplane?" Then have him test out his prediction.



## Featured Activity: Anywhere Scavenger Hunt

Here's a fun game to increase children's critical thinking skills! Ask them to find items that fit a specific description. For example, find something that...

- Is smaller than this book
- Can fit inside this cereal box
- Bounces
- Is lighter than this can of soup
- Is longer than the crayon



## Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.

### Citations:

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National Education Association. *Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society*. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/A-Guide-to-Four-Cs.pdf>.



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