



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## 4 E's to Spark Your Child's Interests

Do you have a hobby or an interest in something? Perhaps you like gardening or fixing cars. Whatever it is, you probably find that you want to learn more about it. It is no different for children. Over fifty years of research has confirmed that a child's interest is the most powerful ingredient for learning. When a child is interested in something she is

- ♥ engaged and pays attention to it,
- ♥ less distracted by other things like extraneous noises, and
- ♥ highly motivated to explore and learn more about it.

Studies have shown that the more motivated a young child is to learn, the more likely she will be successful later. So how can we spark a child's interest in the early years?

Innovative learning coach, Jamie Hand, shares 4 E's – 4 simple steps to help you discover your child's interest and how to spark her desire to learn.

- ♥ **Excite:** What *excites your child*? Observe carefully what she looks at, plays with, talks and laughs about, and what questions she asks.
- ♥ **Explore:** Give your *child opportunities to explore* her interest. For example, if your child likes buses, then take her on a bus ride. Point out the parts of the bus, sing songs and read books about the bus.
- ♥ **Extend:** *Extend your child's learning and pique her curiosity.* For example, after the bus ride, make a pretend bus using a cardboard box, and encourage her to recall and make parts (wheels, steering wheel, etc.) for her bus.



- ♥ **Evaluate:** *Evaluate the learning that took place.* What does your child now know about the bus that she didn't know before? What questions does she still have? Her questions will provide opportunities for further explorations and learning!

In this newsletter, we will present additional ideas for using the 4 E's with each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers. By using the 4 E's, your child will not only learn more about the subject of her interest, but she will also discover that learning is fun!

### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

Dr. Susan Engel explains that babies are born with a “natural and active interest in knowing more about the world around them.” However, she warns that this natural curiosity becomes fragile over time and can weaken for children who are not given opportunities to explore their curiosities. *You play a key role in giving your child the opportunities that spark her desire to learn.*

**Excite:** You excite your baby. Infants are eager to interact with the people they see every day. Around their second month of life, babies will also start to show an interest in the things around them. You can discover her interests by seeing her:

- ♥ Listen to, look at, move her arms or legs, smile, laugh, turn toward, or coo at someone she is interested in.
- ♥ Look at/track an interesting object with her eyes when it is moved.
- ♥ Reach for, touch, grasp, listen to, and mouth objects she likes.



**Explore and Extend:** Respond to your baby’s smiles and coos, talk to, sing, read and play interactive games (such as peek-a-boo). When you talk about the things she is looking at or reaching for, and give her opportunities to further explore these objects through her senses (see, listen, touch, smell and taste), you spark her curious mind.

**Evaluate:** Discovering your baby’s likes and dislikes is all about trial and error. She shows signs that she is not interested – such as turning her head away, closing her eyes and falling asleep, crying, making “fussy” sounds, or hiccupping. When you see these kinds of signals, give your baby a rest. Put aside her toys and rock and sing quietly to her, or just hold her.

## Activity for Infants: *Floor Time with the 4 E’s*

What You Need:

A soft blanket, futon, or beach towel

What to Do:

1. Place your baby on her back on a soft blanket, futon, or towel on the floor to give her a chance to look at new things.
2. Change her position or the position of the blanket after a few minutes.
3. Notice what she is interested in. If she looks at something, talk about it. For example, “Do you see the fan? I’ll turn it on. It spins. Do you feel the cool air?”
4. If she looks at you, talk about your facial features (eyes, nose, hair, etc.). As you name them, guide her hand to touch your eyes, nose, hair, etc. Then, gently touch her facial features saying, “You have a nose just like mommy!”
5. Wiggle your hand to get your baby’s attention.
6. Slowly “walk” your fingers up her leg.
7. End the “walk” with a gentle tickle on her tummy



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*

# Toddlers

As your toddler's language skills develop, she may begin to ask questions about what she sees, hears, and experiences, such as "what that?" or "why?" –a sign of her growing interest in the world around her.

**Excite:** Take note of the things that capture your child's attention. Try the following:

- ♥ Point out things to her, such as a bug you happen to see outside your door.
- ♥ Take her on outings, such as to the zoo.

Ask yourself, "Does she want to get a closer look at something? Does she ask questions or excitedly talk about it?"

**Explore:** Give her opportunities to further learn about a topic. For example, if she showed excitement in visiting the zoo, place some plastic animals in a tub of sand. Let her play, and watch to see what she does with them.

**Extend:** Show her how to use these materials in new ways. For example, join her in play and pretend that two animals are talking about their



ideas to build a house so they don't get wet when it rains. Then add new materials, such as leaves or an empty shoe box and see what she does with it.

**Evaluate:** Listen to your child questions to evaluate her interest and understanding. To spark further exploration, try the following when she asks, "why?"

- ♥ Say, "What do you think?" or "You tell me why."
- ♥ Say, "Let's find out." Together look in a book or internet, or take her back to the place where her curiosity was sparked – to help her find answers.
- ♥ Comment out loud on other questions. For example, "What is that animal? It looks like a cheetah... I wonder where it sleeps at night."

## Activity for Toddlers: *Wondering about Birds with the 4 E's*

What You Need:

A non-fiction picture book about birds

What to Do:

1. Take your child on a walk outdoors and take the bird book with you. As you walk together, look for a bird.
2. When you see a bird say, point it out to her, and ask questions like, "I wonder where that bird is flying to? Where do you think it's going?"
3. Safely follow the bird and watch/point out where it lands.
4. Pique her curiosity by commenting on what you see. Say, "It landed on that tree! Do you think that's where it lives?"
5. Take out the bird book and read it to her to find out where birds build nests.
6. Say, "Now we know that some birds build their home in trees!"

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*





## Preschoolers

Your preschooler's memory abilities are growing stronger, as well as her creativity, reasoning and problem-solving skills. This is the perfect time to give her hands-on opportunities to investigate, question, and form explanations about the things that spark her curiosity.

**Excite:** Think about the following:

- ♥ What captures your child's attention with little prompting from you or others?
- ♥ What tends to encourage her patience, problem-solving, and creativity?

**Explore:** Provide tools and resources to aid your child's exploration, such as a magnifying glass or books. Keep in mind that she learns through repetition. When she asks for the same book to be read, or asks to do activities again, this helps the connections in her brain get stronger.



**Extend:** Encourage more complex thinking by giving her opportunities to investigate her questions. Here are some ideas you can try:

- ♥ Help her recall and re-create her experience through drawings or by role playing.
- ♥ Encourage her to record her findings in a journal, chart or calendar.

**Evaluate:** Help your child to reflect on her experience and what she learned. Are there questions she still has about the topic? Allow her investigations to continue for days, even weeks – for as long as she is interested.

### Activity for Preschoolers: *Investigating the Garbage Truck with the 4 E's*

What You Need:

- Books about: the garbage truck, the landfill/transfer station, and/or recycling
- A blank monthly calendar and markers or crayons



What to Do:

1. Join your child in watching the garbage truck collect your trash, allowing her to watch for several days while commenting on your observations. You might say, "Today he is collecting our recycled waste."
2. Listen carefully to the questions your child asks. Read books or show her children's videos about the garbage truck.
3. Keep a monthly calendar to tally: the days the garbage truck collected your family's trash, the color of the bin, and the time the trash was collected. At the end of the month, talk about her findings.
4. If possible, take your child to your community dump or transfer station so she can see first-hand where the trash goes and what the workers do with it. Talk about what she sees, hears, and smells.
5. Have her draw a picture or act out her experience using toy vehicles, roads, and newspaper/recyclables to represent trash, and have her explain it to you.
6. Talk about things she learned and listen for questions she may still have. For example, if she is curious about recycling, give her hands-on opportunities to explore this topic further.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*

## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Learn through her senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching
- ♥ Develop control of small and large muscles

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination
- ♥ Develop her curiosity about how things work



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

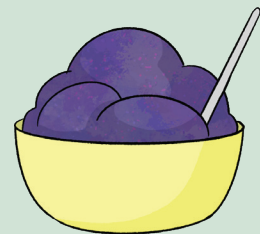
### Okinawan Sweet Potato Ice Cream

*Adapted from: Hawaiian Electric*

Ingredients:

¼ cup cooked and mashed Okinawan sweet potato  
2 cups half and half

½ cup sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla



Directions:

1. Mix ingredients until well blended and pour mixture into a quart-size plastic freezer bag. Release air, seal the bag, and reinforce the seal with masking tape.
2. Fill a 3 lb. coffee can 1/3 full with ice.
3. Add ¼ cup rock salt, the sealed freezer bag, and another ¼ cup of rock salt on top.
4. Place the lid tightly on the can and reinforce the seal with masking tape.
5. Sit on the floor with your child and roll the can to each other for 10 minutes.
6. After 10 minutes, empty the can. Then, repeat steps #2 - #5.
7. Now your ice cream is ready to eat! Yum! (Note: if the ice cream is not hard enough, place the bag in the freezer until it hardens).
8. Mix and serve as-is or topped with coconut flakes

## Resources

### *Checklist and Guidelines for Identifying Young Children's Interest*

[http://puckett.org/CECLL/ECLLTools\\_3.pdf](http://puckett.org/CECLL/ECLLTools_3.pdf)

This checklist includes a list of activities that your child may find interesting, and will help you get started in identifying your child's interests.

### *Early Preschool Interest-Based Everyday Activity Checklist*

<https://asdtoddler.fpg.unc.edu/sites/asdtoddler.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/Casetools-EarlyPreschool-InterestBasedEverydayActivityChecklist.pdf>

This checklist includes a list of everyday activities that are sources of learning opportunities for infants and very young children below 15-18 months of age.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

***Wheels on the Bus*** by Raffi

Even the youngest child will enjoy this classic book and sing-aloud about the bus that goes "all around the town!"

***Dear Zoo*** by Rod Campbell

Young readers will love lifting the flaps to discover the animals the zoo has sent as potential pets—a monkey, a lion, and even an elephant!

### Preschoolers

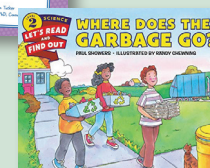
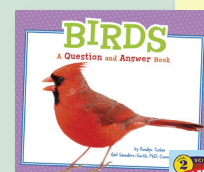
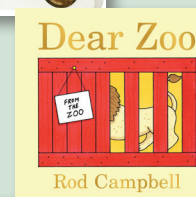
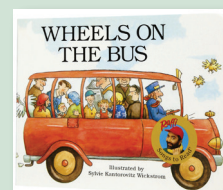
***Birds: A Question & Answer Book*** by Isabel Martin

This book includes simple text and colorful images and includes answers to common questions that children have about birds—such as what they eat and where they live. It is a good book to help your child find answers to her questions about birds.

***Where Does the Garbage Go?*** by Paul Showers (A Let's Read and Find Out Book\*)

This picture book is filled with diagrams that follow a garbage truck to the landfill, the incinerator and the recycling center.

\*Find other 'Let's Read and Find Out' Books on various subjects at your local library



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