



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. VIII, No. 6

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 Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

Got Containers? Let's Learn!

Our world is full of containers! From the containers used for left-over foods – to huge shipping crates...anything used to hold or transport something (such as boxes, cans, jars, baskets, and pots) is a container. And since containers are commonly found in homes, this makes them very familiar to young children.

Did you know that our brains crave familiarity (thing we can easily recognize)? Research has confirmed that learning new concepts becomes easier for children when using materials that they are familiar with. A pathway to learning is built when we connect what the child doesn't know with what he already knows.

In this newsletter, we'd like to present an additional teaching strategy you might consider when planning for children. This strategy, based on the *Project Approach* developed by Dr. Lillian Katz and colleagues, focuses on giving children hands-on opportunities to investigate a familiar topic (like containers) over several weeks.

Giving children opportunities for in-depth investigations empowers them to seek answers to their questions, and in the process:

- Supports their learning of concepts (e.g., quantity, size, etc.)
- Deepens their critical thinking (investigating, analyzing, questioning, problem solving, etc.)
- Promotes their creative thinking (imagining, discovering, etc.)

Through the process of investigation, children learn how to learn.

In this newsletter we will provide examples of how familiar containers can support the learning of concepts, deepen critical thinking, and promote creative thinking at each age level – infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. We will also present examples of questions you can pose to spark children's interest and curiosity to further investigate containers.



Support the learning of concepts

You can use familiar containers during everyday routines with the children in your care as a way to introduce or reinforce concepts. For infants, talk about concepts like “empty/full” and for the older children, introduce concepts such as spatial awareness and size. Here’s some examples:

- **Infants** – You can say, “Look your bottle is full of milk.” And later, “Your bottle is empty now. See no more milk in your bottle.”
- **Toddlers** – For a mobile toddler, incorporate physical involvement by using a laundry basket to have the child go under it, climb over it, run around it, stand behind it, etc. Be sure to use these words as you show the child how to do each action.
- **Preschoolers** – Use “superlative adjectives” (comparative words like, “big, bigger, biggest”). As an example, you can play a game by placing 3 items of different weights (e.g., a house key, a bar of soap, and a rock) into 3 separate containers with lids such as empty sour cream containers. Ask the child to pick up each container to feel how heavy it is and show him how to place them in order by weight using the terms, “heavy, heavier, heaviest.”



Deepen critical thinking

Containers are a great way to encourage children to experiment with how things work, figure things out on their own, and explore answers to questions. Here’s some examples:

- **Infants** – Put small blocks into a container and gently place a lid on it. Then show the infant how you take the lid off to get to the blocks inside. Next, put the lid back on and let him try it. You can say, “Now you try it. How can you get the blocks out? Yes, take the lid off first. You did it!” The next time, try adding variety with a different type of container and lid.
- **Toddlers** – Provide them with sensory materials (such as water, sand, pompoms) placed in a large box, with recycled containers (e.g., clean milk cartons, yogurt cups, detergent scoops, plastic bottles). As the child experiments with scooping and filling, make comments such as, “I wonder what would happen if you poured all of the sand from the bottle into the yogurt cup? Would it all fit? How can you find out?” Allow the children to explore scooping and filling with different types of containers for several weeks.
- **Preschoolers** – Pose the question, “I wonder if we can make musical instruments with containers?” Then set out some containers (e.g., empty yogurt containers, glass bottles), different types of items to fill the containers (e.g., dried pasta, pebbles, rice, sand, water), masking tape, tapping sticks, etc. and let the children explore to find the answer. Then ask, “Which types of containers make the best musical instrument?”

Promote creative thinking

Containers are great open-ended materials. Creative thinking is built as children discover new ways of using familiar containers, discover ways containers are useful, and even build with them. Here's some examples:

- **Infants** – Give the infant an empty pot and a wooden spoon and see what he does with it. Show him how to turn the pot upside down and bang on it with a wooden spoon. You can say, “Look, you made a drum!”
- **Toddlers** – At clean up time, hand children some toys to put away (more than they can carry). After the children drop some toys a few times, ask if it would be helpful if they used a container to carry them. Then hand them a basket or box to carry the toys to be put away. Say, “Using the basket sure made clean up time easier. I wonder how else containers help us.”
- **Preschoolers** – Give preschoolers different types of clean recycled containers (e.g., oatmeal, sour cream, boxes - jello, toothpaste, cereal, etc.) and say, “I wonder if we can build with these.” Then ask if they have something in mind. To increase preschooler’s thinking and planning skills, have them draw it before they build it! You can also have them work with a partner to help them learn about collaboration and working together.



Questions for Investigating Different Types of Containers

Remember that the questions you pose to children can spark their curiosity and interest to further investigate a topic. As an example, you can find out if the children have an interest in exploring any of the following types of containers below, through the sample questions listed.

Type of container	Sample question to pose
Plant pots, Terrarium	Do you know what part of the plant lives in a container? Have you ever seen a whole plant growing in a container?
Vase	I wonder if vases from different parts of the world look different?
Shipping crate	I wonder if there is a container big enough for a car?
Colander	I wonder why some containers have holes?

Training Opportunity

Picturing the Project Approach: Seeing How It Works for Teachers and Children in Practice, by Sylvia Chard, Carmen A. Castillo and Yvonne Kogan.

This is a free online recorded Early Childhood Investigations webinar that details the phases of the Project Approach and shares concrete examples of the Project Approach in action. The training offers a free certificate for 1.5 training hours. Stay until the end to find out how to access your certificate.

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4772851718551761922>

Featured Activity

Bubble Snakes



What You Need:

- 1 empty plastic water bottle (500 ml size) without cap
- A sock that can fit over the water bottle (one side, child or adult size)
- Dish soap and water
- A small container large enough to fit the bottom of a 500 ml water bottle (e.g., an empty tofu container)
- Adult scissors (for adult use only)

What to do:

1. Use a pair of scissors to cut off the bottom of a plastic water bottle (an adult does this first step).
2. Stretch out the sock and slide it over the cut end of the water bottle to cover the bottle. If needed, fold the sock back so that the mouth of the water bottle (the cap side) is exposed.
3. Make a soap solution in the small container by mixing about 2 tablespoons of dish soap in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water.
4. Dip the bottom end of the bottle (the cut end with the sock over it) into the bubble solution.
5. Blow on the mouth of the bottle to make bubble snakes!
6. Wonder aloud with your child about how he can make a "long," "longer" and "longest" bubble snake. Then get a tape measure and together measure his bubble snakes!

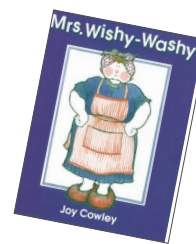
Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Mrs. Wishy Washy

by Joy Cowley

Mrs. Wishy Washy washes her dirty farm animals in her large metal tub. But what happens after she washes them? This story is sure to bring giggles.



Not a Box

by Antoinette Portis

A box is just a box...unless it's not a box. From mountain to rocket ship, a small rabbit shows that a box will go as far as the imagination allows. This board book edition has sturdy pages and is a good size for the youngest readers.



Juna's Jar

by Jane Bahk

Juna and her best friend, Hector, have many adventures together, and they love to collect things in empty kimchi jars. Then one day, Hector moves away without having a chance to say good-bye. Determined to find Hector, Juna turns to her special kimchi jar for help each night and goes on many magical adventures to search for Hector.



Citations

Helm, J. and Katz, L. (2011). *Young Investigators – The Project Approach in the Early Years*. Teachers College Press: New York.

DeLapp, Julia. (n.d.). *Investigating Containers*. Eastern Connecticut State University. <https://www.easternct.edu/center-for-early-childhood-education/investigating/containers.html>



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