

Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – My Family and My Community

Introduction

A child's world begins with self and immediate family members. In Focus Area #1, **About Me**, toddlers were involved in activities that focused on who they are, what they can do and what they feel. These activities support the Social and Emotional Domain in the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards*.

Focus Area #2, **My Family and My Community**, encompasses the child's family and people and places in the community, including the child care/learning community. In the Topics of Study in Focus Area #2, some of the experiences will also support the Social and Emotional Domain in the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards*, specifically as they relate to interactions with peers and feelings of others. In addition they support the Social Studies Domain which addresses children's positive connections to family and community.

In the child care setting, toddlers become increasingly interested in their peers. Friendships between and among toddlers begin to emerge. However, the toddler years may also be ones of conflict among friends because toddlers are egocentric; focusing on their own needs and wants. Toddlers are not yet able to regulate their own emotions and they have limited skills in using language. So most interactions among toddlers may need adult support. This means staying close to toddlers at all times so that you can be aware of behaviors that may require you to step in to prevent problems, to help children gain control of their emotions and behaviors, and/or to redirect children to other activities. You also serve as a model for appropriate play behaviors.

Pretend play is a part of the social development of toddlers. They begin to act out events and familiar routines. They begin to explore social roles, especially those of their family members and powerful figures such as doctors and firefighters. In the pretend area they pretend to cook on the small stove, they put their doll into the doll bed and pretend that it is sleeping. They dress up in male and female clothes and pretend to be mommy and daddy. They use a telephone and pretend to call Grandpa. Older toddlers will sometimes pretend without an object. For example, they will pretend to drive a car by turning their hands in space as though they were turning a steering wheel. Older toddlers also begin to engage in symbolic play in which they take on pretend roles and use objects in an unconventional way. An example of symbolic play is when a toddler uses a block as a telephone or a tennis ball as a scoop of ice cream.

The following appropriate social expectations for toddlers were adapted from the text, *The Comprehensive Toddler Curriculum* by Kay Albrecht and Linda G. Miller, published by Gryphon House (2000):

- Expect toddlers to have a period of adjustment when they are left in a new situation unless there are familiar adults present.
- Children are unable to "share" until well into the third year. Toddlers can be helped to take turns, share resources such as crayons, or wait for a turn, but spontaneous sharing behavior doesn't occur consistently until after the third birthday.
- Manners are difficult for younger children. Eating with a utensil instead of your hands, staying at the table until you are finished, and not dawdling are difficult expectations until children are older. That doesn't mean you don't have rules about these issues, it just means you have to be the one who guides children in following these rules.
- Expectations, such as touching softly and keeping your hands from hitting or grabbing a toy from another child are also difficult for toddlers. Stay close and help children learn these skills by modeling and supporting them.

In this Focus Area and in the Focus Areas that follow, you will find activities that may not directly relate to the topic. There will be many sensory experiences involving things children can see, touch and manipulate. You will also find activities that are repeated from earlier Focus Areas. These sensory experiences and repeated activities are included because toddlers learn through their senses and through repetition.

Through both planned and spontaneous experiences, caregivers can provide opportunities for toddlers to discover many things about themselves, their families and their community, including the child care/learning community.

Teacher Notes

- *In the Focus Area, **My Family and My Community**, there are four Topics of Study:*
 - My Family and Home
 - Things I Do With My Family
 - My Classroom/Learning Community
 - People in My Community
- *Many of the experiences in this Focus Area have an age designation of either Young Toddler (YT) or Older Toddler (OT). However, these two age designations do not specify age in months.*
- *Use your knowledge of individual children to determine which experiences are appropriate for which children in your care.*
- *Consider extending a Topic of Study over several weeks. There is so much toddlers can learn about each topic. Carry over activities from one week to another because toddlers enjoy and learn best through repetition.*

Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements (Rev. 1.1.15) requires the following:

400 PROGRAM – 401 Program Requirements for all ages

5.a The facility shall have an approved curriculum with weekly activity plans appropriate for the developmental needs of each group of children.

To assist your program in meeting this requirement, refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for Toddlers for information on how to develop your plans. In addition, 2 different examples of blank Weekly Activity Plan sheets are included. Feel free to make copies of the plan sheet you select and use it each week.

To help you in planning, there are also 4 samples of completed Weekly Activity Plans that you may use as guides when developing activity plans for your group of children.

Teacher Note: *Should you choose to develop your own Weekly Activity Plan sheet, feel free to use the information presented here as a guide.*

Resources

- Children's books can be purchased online, from school supply catalogs or local book stores.
- Check with your local library for the availability of children's books.
- **Infant /Toddler Photo Library** from Lakeshore Learning (50 photo and activity cards focusing on the following topics: Transportation, Farm Animals, Nature, Pets, Home, Food, Community Helpers, Emotions)
- CDs which can be ordered online or from school supply catalogs:
 - Songs for I Love You Rituals 2 with songs by Dr. Becky Bailey and music by Mar Harmon
 - Sea Gulls Music for Rest and Relaxation by Hap Palmer
 - Baby Beluga by Raffi
 - Quiet Time by Raffi
 - Singable Songs for the Very Young – Great with a Peanut Butter Sandwich by Raffi
 - Toddler Favorite Music – for Little People
 - Toddlers on Parade, KIMBO Educational

Picture File

- Collect pictures that relate to this Focus Area – **My Family and My Community**. Examples of pictures to collect include:
 - houses, apartment buildings, mobile homes
 - people representing different ages; pictures that reflect diversity
 - families going places and doing things together such as shopping, eating in a café or restaurant, in church, at the beach, at a park, on a picnic, hiking, fishing, boating; pictures that reflect diversity
 - family celebrations such as birthdays and holidays
 - children playing together
 - medical personnel and related items such as stethoscopes and medicine bottles
 - police officers, police cars, police on horses and motorcycles
 - firefighters, fire trucks, hats, hoses

Include small (index card size) as well as larger pictures.

Consider mounting the small pictures on index cards. Laminate or cover all of the pictures with clear, self-adhesive paper for durability.

- Post some of the pictures on the wall at toddler's eye level. Observe to see if toddlers look at the pictures and point to and/or name the objects or people in the pictures. Join them and expand on what they say. For example, say to Megan who has pointed to a house and said "house" say "Yes Megan, that's a house. You live in a house with your grandmother."
- Put some of the small pictures in a container and place it in the library area so that it is accessible to children. Observe a child as he takes the pictures out of the box. Should the child bring a picture to you, involve him in discussing what he sees in the picture. "That's a girl and a boy playing ball together."
- Keep some of the pictures in a basket or tote bag within easy reach. Use the pictures with an individual child or a small group of children. Invite them to name objects and to talk about what is happening in the pictures. Allow children to look at the pictures on their own. Model and talk with them about the proper way to handle the pictures.
- Determine if funds are available to purchase **The Infant /Toddler Photo Library** from Lakeshore Learning.

Teacher Note: *The photo cards are to be used to support children's language development and the concepts in the Topic of Study.*

They are not to be used as flash cards!

Teacher Note: *Refer to **Curriculum Tips and Techniques – Picture File**, for additional information about how to organize a picture file.*

Toddler Environment

The toddler environment should always provide equipment and materials for language experiences, manipulative exploration, gross motor and block play, sensory exploration, pretend play and outdoor exploration. The following additions to the environment are intended for the entire topic: **My Family and My Community**.

Library Area

- Add the following teacher-made books:
 - *Places We Call Home*
 - *Friend, Friend, Who Do You See?*
 - *We Are Friends*
 - *Our Family's Favorite Cereal Book*
 - *Keeping Me Safe*
 - *Keeping Me Healthy*
- Add container of pictures that have been laminated or covered with clear self-adhesive paper. (See **Picture File**, page 3 for examples of types of pictures to collect.)

Manipulative Exploration

- Putting on and taking off lids
- Pegboards (wood or plastic) with large, blunt-ended pegs
- Felt houses with felt board

Gross Motor & Blocks

- Add cardboard brick blocks.
- Post pictures of different types of structures such as houses, apartment buildings and mobile homes
- Make family homes blocks as follows:
 1. Stuff small boxes with newspaper and tape them shut.
 2. Glue magazine pictures of houses, apartment buildings and mobile homes onto the boxes.
 3. Cover the boxes with clear self-adhesive paper for durability.
 4. Place blocks where they are accessible to children for building.
- Add small people figures (wood, rubber, or vinyl) and small vehicles
- Make signs from poster board for small vehicles. For example, make a sign for a police car, a fire truck and an ambulance. Attach signs to vehicles with tape.
- Add an emergency vehicle made from a cardboard box that is large enough to hold a doll. Write the word EMERGENCY on the front and sides of the vehicle. Draw wheels and headlights on the box. Attach strong yarn to the front of the box for pulling. Add a small pillow, doll and blanket.

Teacher Note: *Store people figures and vehicles in clear plastic tubs that are labeled with both pictures and words.*

Sensory Exploration

- Add *Textured Houses* book
- Add matching pajama tops and bottoms and laundry basket
- Add matching pajama tops and bottoms made from fabric scraps

Pretend Play

- Add tote bag with pajamas or nightgown, stuffed toys and children's books.
- Add Medical Prop Box with a white shirt for uniform, play or real stethoscope, bandages, empty band-aid box, dolls and doll blankets.
- Have dress-up clothes for both males and females with large buttons and snaps. Demonstrate buttoning and snapping. Encourage children to button and snap, assisting as needed.
- Have unbreakable full-length mirror that is securely fastened to wall.
- Add unbreakable hand mirrors.
- Add toy telephones (at least 2).

Outdoor Exploration

- Draw 5 foot long chalk line on the sidewalk for children to walk on.
- Make signs from poster board for wheel toys. For example, make a sign for a police car, a fire truck, and an ambulance or emergency vehicle.

Safety Note: *It is the responsibility of the child care program and each employee to ensure the safety of toddlers in the program. This includes the materials and equipment provided for children's use. Should you have safety questions, the developers of this curriculum suggest that you consult with your Child Care Licensing Specialist for technical assistance.*

Curriculum books such as *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & 2s, 2nd Edition*, contain safety information. See **Curriculum Tips and Techniques**, **References** and **Resources**, for additional resources.

Family Connection and Engagement

Send home a note to families stating that for the next few weeks the children will be involved in the Focus Area: **My Family and My Community**. They will participate in experiences that focus on family, their classroom and the community in which they live.

Consider some of the following ways to involve the families:

- Ask families to send the front panel of their child's favorite cereal, explaining that the panel will be used to make a book for the children.
- Invite families to send a photo of the front of their home, one with their child in it, if possible.
- Invite families to send photos of family events such as visiting relatives, going to a park or to the zoo, attending a family reunion, going on vacation, fishing, or boating. Ask them to indicate on the back of each photo the name and relationship of each person in the photo and the event.
- Include the titles and authors of some of the child's books that relate to the Focus Area: **My Family and My Community**. Suggest that they look for these books in the local library, check them out and read them with their toddler.
- Plan a time for children's family members to come and play. Consider a Family Play Night where families can have an opportunity to be involved in some of the children's activities and where families can get to know each other. Take photos of the event and display them in the classroom or in a photo album.