

Adventures for Toddlers

A curriculum for children from 18 to 36 months

Curriculum Tips and Techniques

Introduction

As **Adventures for Toddlers** was being developed, it was decided that a collection of tips and techniques would be beneficial to teachers as they implement the curriculum. The suggested tips and techniques are divided into three major categories:

- Toddler Environment
- Toddler Activities
- Families

The section that follows this introduction is titled **Matching the Curriculum to Toddlers**. This section explains who toddlers are by age and presents a brief glimpse of what toddlers are like and how they learn. Caregivers are encouraged to learn more about toddler development and how this influences the curriculum that is planned for them.

Matching Curriculum to Toddlers

During the first 18 months of life, children are usually referred to as young infants (birth to 8 months) and mobile infants (8 to 18 months). Children between the ages of 18 and 36 months are usually called toddlers. Some resources use the terms infants, toddlers and two year olds. For the purposes of this curriculum, the term toddlers will be used for children between the ages of 18 and 36 months with references to younger toddlers and older toddlers.

While each toddler is a unique individual, typically developing toddlers share many common characteristics. Toddlers are developing rapidly in all domains of development and learning, especially social and emotional development, cognitive development, physical development and health, and language development. They are also beginning to understand some things in the domains of emergent literacy, mathematical thinking, science and technology, social studies and creativity and aesthetics.

Toddlers are active. They can walk, run, climb and jump. They touch and they manipulate objects in their environment. The five senses of touch, taste, smell, seeing and hearing are the information gathering tools of toddlers. Through their senses they get in touch with their world.

Toddlers are making choices and becoming more independent. They are capable of doing many things for themselves.

Toddlers are acquiring language at a rapid rate. They use gestures and words to communicate their ideas, needs and feelings to others.

Toddlers are interested in other people. They play near and with others. They are observant of one another and quickly learn which parents belong to which child. They can sometimes attend to and care for others, but may also bite, hit, shove, and have difficulty sharing.

Through both planned and spontaneous activities and through the arrangement of the environment, teachers can provide opportunities to develop in all of the domains of development and learning. The key for teachers is to match the activities to each toddler in her care.

The *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 Months* identifies Learning Goals for each Domain of Development and Learning. In **Adventures for Toddlers**, learning goals from the Standards are listed for all of the activities. Consider reviewing the Standards as a foundation for using the **Adventures for Toddlers** curriculum with your children.

Toddler Environment

Collecting and Using Recyclable Materials and Found Objects

Enhance the toddler environment and curriculum by collecting and using safe recyclable materials and found objects.

- Involve families in collecting items for the classroom.
- Send home a paper sack with a list of items you need attached to it. Ask families to return the items in the sack.
- Contact local businesses for materials.
- Collect only those items that you can store until you have a need for them.
- Check all items for safety and cleanliness

Suggested list of recyclable materials and found objects to collect:

- clear and sturdy plastic bottles (Gatorade, whipping cream and single serve juice)
- cracker and cereal boxes, paper towel rolls, boxes of all sizes, magazines, catalogs, recycled paper, cardboard, envelopes, junk mail, stickers, bubble wrap, paper grocery bags
- yarn, ribbon netting, lace, fabric and felt scraps, wallpaper samples, carpet squares, PVC pipe and connections
- artificial flowers, plastic vases
- pictures from magazines and catalogs that reflect real people, not cartoon characters, pictures that show people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities and gender in non-stereotyping roles.
- items from nature that are safe for toddlers to touch and investigate: pinecones, shells and rocks (too large to swallow), feathers
- dress-up clothes for males and females: shoes (low heels), purses, vests, dance costumes, shirts, gloves, wallets

Teacher Note: *Children's size 10-12 clothing works well. If adult clothing is used, shorten length of item and of sleeves for safety and ease of use by children.*

Developing a Picture File

Collect pictures that relate to each toddler topic and organize them by Focus Areas.

- About Me
- My Family and My Community
- My Favorite Things for Play and Learning
- Clothes We Wear
- Things that Grow
- Animals in Our World
- More Animals
- On the Go

Include small (index card size) pictures 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.

Determine if funds are available to purchase **The Infant/Toddler Photo Library**, published by Lakeshore Learning. See Lakeshore catalog or Lakeshore online site for ordering information.

Making Charts

Create charts to promote language and literacy learning.

- Charts can be made for Mother Goose rhymes and poems.
- Use both upper and lower case letters. Use upper case letters for the beginning of a sentence and proper names.
- Use extra spacing between words and between lines.
- Include some illustrations.



Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

Up above the world so high,

Like a diamond in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

How I wonder what you are!

Making Felt/Velcro Board Stories with Patterns

- Run copies on cardstock (index paper or tag board).
- Color pieces with markers or color pencils (may not be as bright).
- When putting two large pieces together, use a glue stick to prevent pieces from wrinkling when laminating.
- Laminate story objects. You may cut pieces before or after laminating.
- Attach Velcro dots or pieces to back of each object.

Note: Characters for storytelling should be large and visible for all children listening to the story. Patterns may be enlarged if preferred.

Teacher Notes:

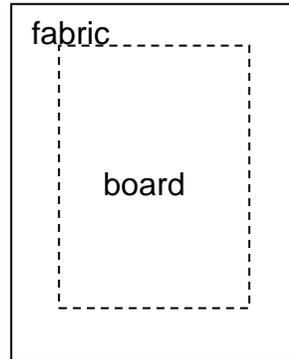
- Make sure Velcro or felt pieces are securely attached to figures.
- **Remember** that patterns are **not** to be used for children's art projects!

Directions to Make a Story Board

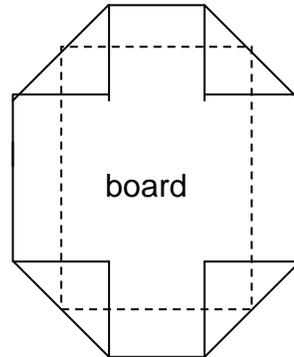
Choose a board (plywood, foam board, or 2-3 layers of corrugated cardboard).

Size should be approximately 2' x 3'.

Fabric can be either felt or Velcro.
Make sure the board is 2-3 inches smaller than your fabric on all four sides. Lay your fabric face down and place the board in the center.



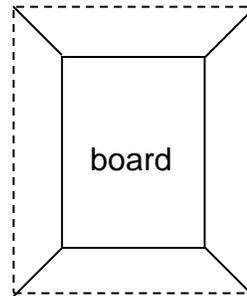
Fold the corners of the fabric in to the corners of the board. Fasten the corners with tape.



Fold the top and bottom edges in and fasten them to the board with tape. Fold the sides in and fasten them to the board with tape also.

Tape all fabric edges securely so there are no loose edges.

Turn your story board over and tell a story!



Setting up and Managing the Toddler Environment

Create an environment that is responsive to the needs and growing abilities and interests of toddlers.

In the earlier section of this document titled **Matching the Curriculum to Toddlers**, common characteristics of toddlers are discussed. These same characteristics influence the ways you arrange the toddler environment. For example:

- Because toddlers are active and can walk, run, climb and jump, allow space for movement and arrange equipment for safety.
- Because toddlers make choices, organize toys on low, open shelves. Label the containers with pictures and words.
- Because toddlers play near and with others, define areas where two or three children can play. Provide duplicates of toys, especially toys that are favorites.

Expand play areas for older toddlers

Consider developing more distinct exploration areas for older toddlers; areas where toddlers can play alone and beside one or two other children. The areas can be defined with rugs, kitchen furniture and storage shelves, for example. The weekly activity plan sheet suggests the following areas:

- Language area (books and other language materials)
- Manipulative exploration area
- Gross motor and block area
- Sensory exploration area
- Pretend play area
- Outdoor experiences

Toys and Materials for Play

- push and pull toys
- animal figures – soft, fuzzy and washable animals, rubber, wood, vinyl and plastic figures
- puzzles
 - 2 or 3 pieces with knobs
 - 4 to 5 pieces in which each piece is a complete picture and has knobs
 - 6 to 12 pieces **(OT)**
- matching games **(OT)**
 - Large dominoes (2 to 4 inches)
 - Lotto boards with simple and familiar pieces to match
- manipulative toys
 - shape sorting and activity boxes
 - nesting cups
 - pegboards with large, blunt-end pegs
 - large plastic snap beads
 - plastic links
 - large wooden beads to string **(OT)** – string no longer than 12 inches
 - personal care boards with snaps, buttons, laces, zippers and Velcro strips **(OT)**
 - large plastic or wooden nuts and bolts **(OT)**
- blocks
 - rectangular plastic blocks in a variety of colors
 - cardboard blocks that resemble bricks
 - large, interlocking plastic blocks
 - hardwood unit blocks **(OT)** (specialized shapes such as triangles and arches are not necessary for toddlers)

- simple props for block play **(OT)**
 - small wooden or plastic animals and people
 - doll house furniture
 - small vehicles
 - miniature traffic signs
- transportation toys
 - wooden, metal and plastic cars, trucks, buses, trains, and airplanes
 - vehicles with moveable parts such as steering wheels that turn and bulldozers that pick up and dump **(OT)**
- gross motor toys and equipment (indoors)
 - tunnels to crawl through
 - ride-on equipment toddlers can propel with their feet
 - low climbers with a padded mat underneath it
 - balls
- pretend play
 - dolls – lifelike dolls of vinyl or rubber and dolls with mobile arms and legs, hair and facial features (dolls should reflect diversity and represent the ethnicities of the children in the group)
 - baby blankets and a cradle or small box for children to use as a doll bed
 - toddler-size kitchen furniture – 2 or 3 pieces
 - child-size dishes, pots and pans
 - small suitcase, purses, wallets, tote bags and lunch boxes
 - dress-up clothes such as vests, shirts, and jackets
 - plastic containers and empty food boxes (clean)
 - play telephones
 - small unbreakable mirrors and an unbreakable full-length mirror securely attached to the wall
 - prop boxes: a collection of props that relate to a play theme such as a hospital or medical office; props such as white or green shirts or old scrubs, stethoscope, gauze and adhesive bandages, pads and washable markers for prescriptions
Other play themes might be a grocery store or a pet store.
- books displayed in wall pockets made of heavy-duty fabric and clear plastic, books fanned out on low, open shelves, or stored in a small book display unit with covers facing forward
- rhythm instruments such as drums, xylophones, large bells, rattles and shakers, tambourines, maracas, clackers, cymbals and wood blocks
- materials for art experiences
 - washable liquid tempera
 - flat bristle brushes with nylon hair and stubby handles
 - play dough and goop
 - paper of different types
 - jumbo crayons and chalk
 - collage materials such as yarn, ribbons, paper with assorted textures and colors, recycled gift wrapping, greeting cards, and post cards
 - washable glue or glue sticks
 - water-based felt-tip markers
 - blunt-tipped scissors (4 to 4 ½ inches long) **(OT) (Note: Only allow older toddlers to use scissors with close supervision)**

Favorite Art Recipes

Goop

2 cups water
½ cup cornstarch
food coloring

- Pour water into saucepan
- Bring water to boiling on high heat
- Stir in cornstarch
- Stir in food coloring
- Keep stirring until smooth
- Cool before using

Note: *Provide a plastic-covered surface such as a vinyl placemat for children to play with the goop.*

Note: *Goop can be reused. Store in an airtight container.*

Gak

1 cup liquid starch
1 cup white glue
food coloring (optional)

- Pour glue and food coloring (optional) into bowl
- Mix thoroughly
- Add starch slowly and mix in
- Knead

Note: *Gak will feel like smooth leather. It can be reused. Store in an airtight container.*

Slime

1 cup liquid starch
2 cups white glue
food coloring

- Pour glue and food coloring into bowl
- Mix thoroughly
- Add starch slowly and mix

Note: *Slime can be reused. Store it in an airtight container.*

Silly Putty

1 cup white glue
1 cup cornstarch

- Combine ingredients in bowl

Note: *Silly putty can be reused. Store in an airtight container.*

Note: *Elmer's Glue-All (not Elmer's School Glue) is recommended*

Scented Playdough

1 Cup flour
½ Cup salt
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 tablespoons cooking oil
1 small package unsweetened flavored drink mix
1 cup boiling water

- Mix together flour, salt, oil and unsweetened flavored drink mix
- Add the cup of boiling water. Mix well
- Knead the mixture until it forms a soft dough.
- Store in a sealed container.

Note: *Add 1 teaspoon of scented extract such as peppermint or lemon as an alternative to the drink mix.*

- materials for sensory experiences
 - sterilized fine grain sand sold at hardware and home improvement stores
 - sand tables or individual tubs
 - water table with individual basins placed in it, or individual basins/tubs on a low table (**Note: Use only fresh water, empty the tubs after each use, and sanitize water tubs and props after each use.**)
 - props such as plastic or vinyl animals, people, and boats, small plastic watering cans, funnels, sieves, wire whisks, slotted spoons, squeeze bottles, basters, ladles, scoops, small rakes and shovels
 - sensory tubs with safe materials such as cotton balls, scoops, small plastic containers and tongs
 - sound bottles and sensory bottles

Sensory Bottles

Sensory bottles are clear sturdy, plastic bottles filled with a variety of liquid and solid materials that provide opportunities for observation and experimentation. These bottles are inexpensive, simple to make, and appeal to infants through school-age children. Toddlers are especially captivated by sensory bottles.

Teacher Note: *Use sturdy bottles such as Gatorade, whipping cream or single serve juice. Water or soda/cold drink bottles are too flimsy for making sensory bottles.*

Tips for Making and Using Sensory Bottles

- Collect clear sturdy bottles such as Gatorade, whipping cream, and single serve juice. Water or soda bottles are too flimsy to use.
- Wash bottles and remove all labels.
- Fill bottles with a variety of solid and liquid materials.
- Securely glue the bottle caps onto the bottles.
- Cover the caps with a strong tape.
- Make collections of bottles available to toddlers on shelves or in a basket or other container.
- Guide toddlers in safe use of the bottles with comments such as, "Tamisha, try rolling the bottle instead of throwing it." Redirect toddlers to throw safe objects such as socks into a plastic basket.
- Observe toddlers as they experiment with the bottles. Invite them to experiment with the bottles with comments such as, "Margaret, when you shake the bottle the stars move."
- Sanitize bottles after toddlers play with them.
- Be creative as you experiment with making different sensory bottles.

Shiny Bottle

- Fill a bottle with shiny objects such as sequins, beads and satin ribbon, leaving enough space so that objects will move when toddlers shake or roll the bottle.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Confetti Bottle

- Put several spoonfuls of confetti in the bottle.
- Add water and food coloring.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Creepy Crawly Bottle

- Pour 1/3 cup of clear corn syrup in the bottle.
- Add red and yellow food coloring.
- Drop in several plastic spiders and/or fishing worms.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Wave Bottle

- Fill bottle 2/3 full with water.
- Add several drops of food coloring to the water.
- Fill the bottle to the top with vegetable oil or mineral oil.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Crayon Shavings Bottle

- Make crayon shavings with a crayon sharpener or grater.
- Put several tablespoons of crayon shavings in the bottle.
- Fill the bottle to the top with water.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Confetti and Crayon Shavings Bottle

- Make crayon shavings with a crayon sharpener or grater.
- Put confetti and crayon shavings in the bottle.
- Fill the bottle to the top with colored water.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Star Bottles

- Add color hair-setting gel to bottle, leaving about 2” of air space.
- Add a small package of confetti star shapes in the bottle and shake to combine with gel.
- Glue on the bottle cap and cover the cap with strong tape.

Safety Note: *Check the bottles each day to make sure the bottle cap is securely glued and taped on the bottle.*

- gross motor toys and equipment (outdoors)
 - sturdy toys for pushing and pulling
 - small pails and buckets, small plastic shovels, rakes, scoops, and small watering cans for collecting, dumping and filling
 - water play with a sprinkler or hose, or in a water table or small dish pans (**Note: Use only fresh water in tubs, empty the tubs after each use, and sanitize water tubs and props after each use.**)
 - sand play - (**Note: sand boxes must be covered when not in use**)
 - structure for climbing and sliding
 - riding toys that toddlers can push with their feet
 - small tricycles and vehicles toddlers can pedal (**OT**)
 - balls for throwing, rolling, and kicking

Teacher Notes:

- *Make sure all toys meet safety standards so that toddlers can explore them safely with all of their senses. Toddlers are putting things in their mouths. Therefore, make sure all items for toddler's use pass the choking test. Check with your Licensing Specialist for additional safety information.*
- *Use only washable stuffed animals, dolls, doll blankets, doll clothes and dress-up clothes and have a schedule for washing the items at least weekly.*

Planning for the Day

Program structure is the second component of the learning environment for toddlers. Structure includes both daily schedule and plans which give caregivers direction for working with toddlers.

The daily schedule includes routines such as:

- greeting/departing
- meals/snacks
- nap/rest
- diapering/toileting

The schedule for these basic routines should be flexible and individualized to meet each child's needs.

The structure for each day also includes planned activities that promote children's development and learning; activities such as:

- playing with a variety of toys, including manipulatives
- reading books with children
- participating in language experiences such as storytelling, Mother Goose rhymes and finger plays
- exploring sensory and art materials
- enjoying using large muscles, both indoors and outdoors
- moving to music and singing favorite songs
- pretending and imitating

Teacher Note: *Toddler Topics include ideas and materials for all of these activities.*

While an appropriate schedule and plans will be different for each program, they will share some common characteristics such as:

- schedule is flexible and individualized to meet each child's needs
- schedule allows sufficient time for play, for routines, and for transitions
- schedule provides for a balance between active and quiet times
- schedule provides for a balance of indoor and outdoor experiences
- schedule includes opportunities for children to be alone or with another child and to spend time in small groups

Content for this section based on information from *ITERS, Revised Edition (2003)* and *Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos (2006)*

Toddler Activities

Reading Books with Children

Before we begin a discussion about using books with toddlers, let's consider some characteristics of toddlers that will influence this experience. An awareness and understanding of these toddler characteristics can make reading books with them a more enjoyable experience for both the children and the teacher.

Can everyone agree that toddlers are very busy and very active? This means they may not sit still for the entire book. This is especially true for young toddlers. Because this is the way toddlers are, resist the urge to try and change them, but rather change what you do. For example, don't always insist on reading a book from beginning to end. Some toddlers may not be ready for this. You might open the book and begin naming objects on a page. Talk about the book. "There's a picture of a big cat in this book." Soon one or more toddlers will probably join you. They may only stay for a minute, leave and return again. You stay in place and allow toddlers to move in and out of the reading experience. Toddlers will begin to spend longer and longer times reading a story with you. Older toddlers can listen to longer stories with simple plots.

Toddlers like softness and coziness in their environment. A rug and soft pillows and cushions in a quiet and cozy area of the room with books attractively displayed and within the child's reach say to a toddler, "This is a good place for you to be. This is a place where you can choose a book and bring to me so that I can read it to you. Or you can choose a book to read on your own." Interesting pictures displayed on the wall at toddler's eye level enhance the reading environment.

Toddlers are followers and imitators of adults. They watch you very closely and want to be where you are and do what you do. When they see you go to the reading area, they will often follow you. When you show interest in a book, they are likely to be interested as well. Sometimes they will look at books on their own. They see the way you turn the pages. They observe and may help you put the books back on the book shelf. You are their reading model.

Toddlers like a consistent routine with things done in the same way and at the same time each day. By establishing a regular time and place for reading, toddlers will learn to expect a story at a certain time. Consider reading stories as a way for children to settle down after active outside play, before lunch, or before nap time. Of course if a child brings you a book and asks you to read it, if possible, you will stop what you are doing and read it.

Because **toddlers usually function best in small groups of from two to four children**, teachers may experience difficulties when attempting to read to a large group of children. Group reading often occurs spontaneously. Group reading may occur when a child brings you a book to read and other children join in. Group reading may also occur when you go to the reading area and begin to look at a book and make comments such as, "This book has lots of pictures of horses and pigs and cows." As the attention spans of toddlers increase and as they find it easier to be part of a group, you may be able to gradually increase the group size and lengthen the time for reading.

The tips and techniques for reading with toddlers that follow are based on information from *Story S-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-r-s for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos* by Shirley Raines, Karen Miller, and Leah Curry-Rood, published by Gryphon House (2002).

Tips and Techniques for Reading with Toddlers

- Create a cozy place for reading that is free of distractions. Consistently use the area for reading so that children know that reading occurs each day in this special place.
- Establish a consistent routine for reading. Toddlers will come to look forward to these special times of the day.
- Make reading a pleasant and cozy social experience. Be on the floor with the children. Allow them to sit on your lap or next to you.
- Read to one child or to a small group.
- Make sure all children are comfortable and can see the pictures in the book.
- Allow children to come and go during the reading experience. This is especially important for young toddlers.
- "Talk" the book through at first, rather than reading it. Make comments about pictures on each page. Refrain from skipping a page so there is continuity in the story.
- Be enthusiastic as you read so that children know reading is an exciting experience.
- Model and describe the reading process as you do it. Show the cover and ask, "I wonder what this book is about?" Talk about turning the pages to see what is happening next, invite children to look at the pictures on the page.
- Allow children to choose books whenever possible.
- Slow down while you read. Take time to look at pictures and respond to children's comments.
- Change your voice for different characters in the story.
- Allow children to be actively involved in the reading process. Be in tune to their response to the story and take their lead. Give them time to look at the pictures, to point to and name objects or characters and to ask questions.
- Follow up on the reading experience with older toddlers. Involve them in telling the story when they are familiar with a book. Invite them to tell you what will happen on the next page.
- Connect events in the story to events in children's lives.
- Adjust for a mixed-age toddler group. For example, if you are reading a story more appropriate for older toddlers, have other books available for younger toddlers to handle.
- Be prepared to read the same books over and over again.
- Be flexible. Adjust the reading experience to the children in your group.
- **Read to children throughout each day!**

Telling Stories with Visuals

Prepare for telling stories with visuals such as felt or magnetic storytelling figures or puppets.

- Choose a story
- Read the story several times, visualizing the setting and the characters
- Read the story aloud
- Outline the story on a cue card, noting characters and the sequence of events
- Memorize beginning and ending lines and special phrases
- Practice the story
 - The pauses, gestures and facial expressions
 - Before a mirror, your family, other teachers or staff members

Keep these techniques and tips in mind during storytelling:

- Tell stories with an individual child or with a small group of children, increasing group size as toddlers become ready for this.
- Sit close to the children making sure all the children are comfortable before beginning.
- Tell the story in your own personal way.
- Look at the faces of the children to adjust or clarify the story as needed.
- Slow down. Speak at half of your normal conversation speed.
- Pace the storytelling by going faster during exciting or fast-action parts and slower in serious parts.
- Change the volume and tone of your voice to fit the story.
- Involve the children often, especially with repetitions, rhymes or actions, silly words, or appropriate questions, if the story lends itself to this.
- As you end the story, PAUSE, so children can reflect on what they heard.
- Show children the book that the story came from.

Consider these tips and techniques when using a story board and visuals

- Place the characters on the board as they are introduced.
- Place the characters on the board in a left to right, top to bottom pattern to demonstrate the format for reading words on a page.
- Leave only the essential characters for telling the story on the board.

Adventures for Toddlers offers many opportunities for telling stories with visuals. Patterns for storytelling figures will be noted as attachments when stories are suggested for use in the topics of study.

Teacher Note: *Provide opportunities for children to see the book that is presented in storytelling, since the goal of using visuals is to heighten children's interest in looking at books.*

Saying Mother Goose Rhymes, Finger Plays and Poems

Include Mother Goose rhymes, finger plays and poems in your curriculum each day.

Finger plays

Finger plays or action rhymes are child-oriented verses or rhymes with accompanying motions.

These are some benefits of finger plays / action rhymes:

- Finger plays / action rhymes promote language development by encouraging children to participate in a pleasurable repetition of words. The rhythm of finger plays helps to motivate verbal expression.
- Finger plays / action rhymes help establish more effective listening skills.
- Finger plays / action rhymes help develop small and large muscles as the actions are coordinated with language.
- Finger plays / action rhymes lay a foundation for understanding mathematical concepts because so many include numbers from one to ten. The concept of number rather than counting takes place when children “add” or “subtract”. Examples include “Along came another and then there were four” and “One ran away, and then there were three”.
- Finger plays / action rhymes help children discover concepts of position, time, size, and place using words such as tall, small, little, big, high, low, in, out, up, and down.
- Finger plays / action rhymes help children learn about people and things, such as animals, foods, flowers, and people in our community.
- Finger plays and actions rhymes can be used for transition times.

Use these techniques when teaching a rhyme, finger play or poem:

- Begin to say a finger play or action rhyme, showing the motions.
- Repeat the rhyme and motions with children who join you.
- Invite children to repeat the rhyme with you.
- Select finger plays and rhymes that are short so that it is easier for toddlers to join in.
- Say finger plays and rhymes as a way to gain children’s attention before reading a story or to move them from one activity to another.

Teacher Note: *Patterns for storytelling figures for the Mother Goose Rhymes will be noted as attachments when suggested for use in the topics of study.*

Music and Movement Activities with Toddlers

Music and movement activities, both planned and spontaneous, should be a part of the daily curriculum for toddlers. A teacher does not have to be a great singer to delight young children with music. Music is fun when toddlers and adults sing together short, simple, familiar songs. Make up new songs about the children, their families, and familiar people and events. Use children's names in songs.

Toddlers need a safe and open space for music and movement; space that is large enough so that they will not bump into anything or each other. If possible, choose a carpeted area that will soften falls and absorb sound. Provide a CD player near an electrical outlet. Protect children from the outlet and electrical cord. Consider taking music and movement activities outdoors.

These are some benefits of including music and movement activities in the daily curriculum:

- increases vocabulary
- encourages toddlers to experiment with language
- builds memory
- helps toddlers learn about themselves (names, names for parts of body, what their body can do)
- stimulates children's imagination
- promotes the development of motor skills
- helps children develop coordination and balance
- sharpens children's fine motor skills
- expands children's understanding of their world
- helps children learn concepts such as loud/soft and fast/slow
- helps children learn about positions in space such as up/down and in/out
- supports children's social development as they learn the names of others and share music with others
- supports children's feelings of competence and confidence as they experience success in moving their bodies in new ways

Music experiences for toddlers include:

- singing to a child during hand washing: "This is the way we wash our hands."
- singing during a transition such as cleaning up after play
- singing softly to children before naptime
- singing and playing CDs of different tempos such as fast and slow
- shaking wrist bells, banging cymbals, and striking drums
- holding hands with three or four toddlers and swaying to music
- encouraging toddlers to move to the tempo of the music
- encouraging toddlers to move and dance with scarves
- offering a variety of styles of music: classical, country, folk, reggae, rock and roll and jazz
- encouraging toddlers to clap to the beat of the song
- encouraging toddlers to sing familiar songs
- singing toddler's favorite songs over and over again, while also introducing new songs
- providing music from children's home culture

Teacher Note: *Music should be used for musical activities for toddlers and not as background sound because this sometimes causes caregivers and toddlers to talk over the music in order to be heard. When this happens it can increase the noise level in the room. Continuous background music, especially if it is loud, can make it difficult for toddlers to hear spoken language.*

Using Transition Activities

Every day a toddler classroom is filled with transitions; those times when toddlers change from one routine or activity to the next. Transitions work best when they have been planned for, when they avoid having children wait, and when children are actively involved.

Consider the following suggestions to support smooth transitions for toddlers:

- Plan ahead for transitions so that you can give toddlers your full attention.
- Coordinate with co-worker (if more than one caregiver in a room) so that one helps toddlers through transition tasks and the other moves those who are finished on to the next activity.
- Avoid having children wait for long periods of time with nothing to do. Allow them to stay involved until the next activity is ready.
- Have toys and materials ready for the next activity so that toddlers can immediately become involved.
- Let toddlers know what is going to happen next so they can know what to expect. Make this a sharing of information rather than a “warning” which sometimes implies expectations of difficulty.
- Use a familiar signal to let children know when it is time to transition from one activity or routine to the next. For example, dim the lights and play soft music when it is time for nap.
- Include special songs or finger plays to guide toddlers through transitions.
- Involve a few toddlers rather than the whole group in completing a task such as washing hands.
- Keep transition steps simple and make them clear to toddlers. For example, most toddlers can follow a two step transition such as park your tricycle next to the fence and go to the door with Ms. Celia. However, they may not be able to follow a four step transition such as park your tricycle next to the fence, go to the door with Ms. Celia, walk down the hallway to your classroom, and hang up your coat.

Involving Toddlers in Small Group Activities

Appropriate small group activities for toddlers are those in which:

- children can be active and involved rather than quiet and passive; activities such as singing and dancing or pointing to pictures in a book
- each child has enough space so that he or she is not crowded
- each child can have close interactions with the teacher and not have to wait long periods of time for individual attention
- each child can participate in a meaningful way, for example can clearly see the pictures in a book that is being read
- children have their own materials and do not have to share; a musical instrument for each child or a lump of play dough on an individual mat, for example
- children are not forced to participate, but are allowed to leave the group when they wish and have opportunities to participate in alternative activities

Including Diversity in Materials and Experiences

Create a toddler environment that promotes acceptance of diversity.

Diversity refers to people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities and gender. Include in your toddler environment and in your curriculum, materials and experiences that represent diversity.

- Collect and use pictures of real people and photos that represent diversity. Post the pictures at children's eye level. Use pictures as discussion starters.
- Invite families to provide photos that can be included in an album with each child having a family page, for example.
- Include block play people that reflect a diversity of roles and that represent diverse family groups and people with differing abilities.
- Read with children books that depict diversity in a positive way.
- Provide children's books in their home language. Share the books with families.
- Include music CDs and songs from different cultures.
- Include dolls of different races, ethnic clothing, and cooking and eating utensils from various cultural groups.
- Include skin tone crayons for children to use in their drawings.

Planning for Children Learning English as a Second Language

Have a plan for children in your group who are learning English as a second language.

More and more early care and education programs are enrolling children who are learning English as a second language. The following are a few suggestions to consider when working with these children and their families.

- Get to know the child's family. Learn the names of all family members.
- Attempt to obtain information about home language development from parents and caregivers through a qualified interpreter.
- Encourage families whose first language is not English to create language rich environments at home (in child's home language)..
- Model language usage by using gestures with words and objects as much as possible.
- Learn and use key words and phrases in the child's home language; words for greetings and good-byes, for food, toileting, clothing and family members, for example.
- Integrate key words and phrases of the child's home language into daily routines such as greeting, singing, story time and transitions.
- Read books that have repetitive patterns and phrases and encourage toddlers to complete the phrase with you.
- Include books without words so toddlers can look at the illustrations and name objects or talk about the pictures in their home language and in English.
- Purchase children's books in both English and Spanish (if Spanish is the child's home language).
- Include songs from the child's home language.
- Provide language materials such as discussion pictures and puppets that reflect language and culture of the children.
- Include pretend play props that represent diversity. For example, in the pretend play area have a selection of real cooking utensils from children's homes and different cultures and add empty food boxes from children's homes with print in their home language. (Props are intended for classrooms in which there is a pretend play area.)
- Utilize teaching assistants, volunteers or other members of the community who may speak the child's home language to read books, tell stories, record stories, and sing songs in the child's home language.
- Seek training in the area of diversity, including language.

Planning for Toddlers with Disabilities

Have a plan for inclusion of toddlers with disabilities in your program.

Inclusion brings children with disabilities into many early care and education settings that also serve typically developing children. Some children with disabilities can be easily absorbed into the existing environment with few modifications, while others will require some modification in the environment, schedule and planned experiences.

In Arkansas, the Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities, Part C is the primary resource for guidance and support for programs that enroll infants and toddlers (birth to 3) with special needs.

For information online, go to the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education website.

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/ddds/Pages/default.aspx>

Supporting Independence in Health and Personal Care

Provide daily opportunities for toddlers to develop health and personal care skills.

When toddlers are allowed to develop personal care skills and begin to do things for themselves, they are developing a sense of growing independence and competence.

Observe each toddler in your care and ask yourself, "Which personal care skill is he or she ready to begin to do either on his or her own or with assistance?" Have a plan for each child; a plan that focuses on helping each child be successful in the skills you identify.

Here are some strategies for helping toddlers be successful in the areas of eating, diapering and toileting, dressing and napping.

Eating

- Provide plates and serving dishes and eating, serving and eating utensils that are unbreakable, safe and easy to handle.
- Have appropriate sized tables and chairs rather than high chairs or tables with bucket seats. This allows toddlers to be independent in getting in and out of their chairs.
- Assist children as needed as they learn to pour liquid from a small plastic pitcher into a glass or serve themselves from a serving dish.
- Provide plastic plates and cups and place mats in the pretend play center so that toddlers can act out mealtime experiences.
- Add small plastic pitchers and cups to the water play tub so that toddlers can practice pouring.

Dressing

- Suggest to families that they dress their toddlers in clothing that is easy to manage; pants with elastic waists and shoes with Velcro fasteners, for example.
- Provide coat hooks, cubbies and storage containers for clothing items children can safely get on their own.
- Label toddler's personal storage space with photo labels so they can recognize where their personal items belong.
- Show toddlers how to put on their own coats. Be patient as children are learning this skill. Assist as needed and/or allowed by the toddler.
- Provide dress-up clothing in the pretend play area; clothing that is easy for toddlers to put on and take off.

Diapering and Toileting

- Work cooperatively with families in encouraging children to learn to use the toilet.
- Arrange the environment so children can be successful and feel competent in learning to use the toilet independently. For example, provide child-size toilets and sinks, if possible, or a safe stepstool to help children reach the toilet and sink.
- Allow toddlers to participate in the diapering/toileting process by pulling down their own pants, for example.
- Involve toddlers in washing and drying their hands after diapering/toileting.

Napping

Sleeping and nap time are important parts of the daily schedule for toddlers. Sleep is necessary for their health. To help them develop independence at nap time:

- Provide an individual and labeled cot or mat and linens for each toddler.
- Place each child's cot or mat in the same place each day. Toddlers will quickly learn that "this is my cot and my place."
- Allow toddlers to get their own covers and/or cuddly toy from their cubbie.
- Help toddlers learn to spread their covers on their cot.

Families

Family Connection and Engagement

Involve families in your program,

When early care and education programs create a partnership with families, toddlers stay connected to their families and to their childcare setting. Everyone benefits.

In most topics of study, **Adventures for Toddlers** includes a section, Family Connection and Engagement, that suggests ways families can be involved with their toddler.

Consider these things families can do

- save recyclable materials
- collect pictures that relate to a Toddler Topic
- send family photos to share with others
- participate with their toddler in activities you send home
- share information with you about their toddler's eating, sleeping and diapering/toileting routines

Be creative in thinking of additional ways to involve families in your program.