

MAKING MOMENTS MEANINGFUL

A simple way to incorporate learning throughout your day

The purpose of this guide is two-fold: to help families recognize all the great things they do at home every day to support their child's learning, and to share some helpful hints that can enrich these already powerful moments. As families use this guide, they will gain a new perspective about their child's play experiences.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF EARLY LEARNING

How young children learn

The foundation for all learning is caring and supportive relationships in an environment that is safe, predictable, and nurturing. The home is the place that provides each of these key ingredients. Building upon this foundation, families can have confidence that they have all they need to provide simple and meaningful learning opportunities at home.

When the best learning happens

The essential task for young children's developing brains is to make connections through their experiences. They do this by working out their ideas in conversations with others and as they play. Play is essential for building creative and flexible minds, solving problems, practicing self-regulation, and strengthening relationships. These are the foundations for success in school and life. These opportunities most frequently happen during the regular routines of their day and during relaxed and playful moments at home.

Carefully observing young children during routines and play helps us see what they know and can do. While traditional "school" tasks may demonstrate whether-or-not a child can perform a specific skill in a specific situation, this information provides a limited view of children. Having conversations with children and observing them as they experience their day allows families to truly understand their child's unique strengths, the depth of their thinking, and their growing insights about their world.



How families can help

As families invest time and practice paying attention to what young children are learning during daily routines and natural playful moments, they can see more clearly the ideas children are exploring and gain insights into the child's development. New ideas to support children's learning always follow when adults are curious and intentional observers.



Family members can take time to **NOTICE, WONDER,** and then use what they learn to **PLAN FOR POSSIBILITIES.** As you learn with and from your child, you will strengthen your relationship, support healthy development, and enjoy your time together even more. Remember, your child's most important learning partner in these foundational years is you, and you have what it takes to make great learning happen!



SHOW US!

The Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative would love to see all of this learning in action! We want to see how children are learning together with their families in our state. Please share all of your learning adventures on social media using [#wylearnathome](https://twitter.com/wylearnathome) so others can be inspired by your ideas! Your post will be an entry to win a weekly drawing!



NOTICE



Noticing is simply carefully observing what children are doing without making a judgement. It is your initial investment in supporting your child's learning. Being a good observer becomes easier with practice and is an important first step in creating unforgettable moments and opportunities.

Preparing to Notice

Before you sit down with your child to play, take a deep breath and clear your mind. Make sure you are ready to really watch what is going on without judgment. If we can focus on what's happening rather than what we think should happen, we can open our own minds to experiencing something with our child and learn something new for ourselves.

Here are a few things you can practice noticing:

- How your child is choosing to spend and focus his/her time
- Who your child is playing with or talking to
- What materials he/she is drawn to/using
- Words or phrases he/she is using
- The things he/she is doing well
- The length he/she stays with an activity or material

As you are noticing, remember to look for your child's strengths. Seeing children in this way highlights all of the things they are capable of, and opens the door for them to surprise us. When children are joyful and excited, attentive and focused, and drawn to an activity often, they are helping us see their strengths. Taking time to notice draws our attention to the details of children's play, which invites curiosity, and prepares us/you to ask deeper questions and gain new insights.

WONDER



Wondering is more than simply observing. It is asking new questions about children's motives, actions, and interests. This requires a shift in thinking and challenges us as adults to dig deeper. You can practice by asking and answering questions like those found below.

- I wonder what is actually happening here...
- I wonder why my child is drawn to and excited about this activity...
- I wonder why he/she is exploring materials in this way...
- I wonder what he/she is trying to accomplish...
- I wonder what ideas he/she is experimenting with...
- I wonder what factors are influencing what he/she is doing...
- I wonder how interacting with others is influencing the moment...

As you ask these questions, practice freeing yourself of your assumptions and expectations, and opening your mind to new possibilities.



PLANNING FOR POSSIBILITIES



When you plan for possibilities, you simply use the things you noticed and wondered about to inspire new ideas for your time together. You can consider making changes to the environment and the ways you interact and support learning. For example, you could consider changing location or materials, the kind of help you do or do not offer, and ways to present new challenges and build on your child's interests.

Here are some suggestions of ways you can to plan for possibilities

- Respond to your child's interests
- Help your child solve problems
- Add something new
- Move locations
- Ask questions
- Share your ideas
- Connect to previous experiences
- Tell children what you are seeing them do
- Take pictures of your child engaged in play
- Try introducing new or interesting words
- Join your child in their play and practice using your imagination (even if it's awkward!)

An example of what this process might look or sound like:

Scenario: Billy is playing at your feet in the kitchen and has wandered over to the cabinet where your Tupperware dishes are stored. Noticing a potential way to keep your child busy, you help them quickly pull out the dishes and model how you match and put lids on the containers. He almost immediately starts putting them away and doesn't seem interested in playing anymore.

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| | <p>"I notice..." (What you are seeing, hearing, feeling...)</p> | <p>I notice that Billy is pulling the Tupperware out of the cabinet. He is squealing excitedly and keeps his focus in the cabinet.</p> |
| | <p>"I wonder..." (What is the child enjoying, doing well, or experiencing)</p> | <p>Since my attempt at matching lids didn't seem to catch, I wonder if he likes the loud sounds the containers make when he throws them out of the cabinet... I wonder if he just likes the act of emptying the cabinet... I wonder if throwing the dishes feels exciting to him...</p> |
| | <p>Planning for Possibilities (Plan for what could be coming next)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to try filling one of the containers he's playing with full of different bits/pieces, put the lid on, and see if he's interested in emptying/filling that. • I want to try putting different items in the cupboard that would make a different sound when he throws them on the ground. • I want to try giving him different things to throw into a basket or some sort of target. |



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This resource was created by the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative (WY ECPLC). The PLC is made up of Regional Facilitators who work with early childhood professionals to provide resources and learning opportunities that elevate the early childhood field in Wyoming. We created this document in hopes of inspiring families to take a deeper look into the lives of their young children and learn with them in new ways

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