



# Facilitator's Guide

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
About this Guide .....	2
Key Ideas .....	2
Learning Goals .....	3
Agenda .....	4
Preparation .....	4
Facilitation Tips .....	5
<b>Training</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Introduction .....	6
Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning .....	8
Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways .....	9
Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together .....	13
Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other .....	17
Try It .....	21
Wrap Up .....	21
Glossary .....	22
<b>Handouts</b> .....	<b>23</b>
Self-Assessment	
Learning Log	
Try It	
Best Practices	
Learning Guidelines and Standards	
Resources for Further Learning	
Training Evaluation	

## Video

Accompanying video for *Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning* can be streamed at [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/).

"Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning" (07:25)

Segment 1: "Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways" (0:52–2:40)

Segment 2: "Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together" (2:40–4:51)

Segment 3: "Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other" (4:51–7:25)

## Introduction

This professional development module is designed to help you lead educators in using best practices to support young toddlers' learning. It is one of several modules developed for early childhood educators by the Department of Early Education and Care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For more information about this professional development module, visit [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/).

### About this Guide

This Facilitator's Guide provides instructions and narrative for delivering a video-based training for early childhood educators. You'll find an agenda, learning goals, preparation suggestions, talking points, activities, and handouts. You'll also find general tips and resources to help you facilitate the training. Use these materials with the accompanying video to lead family child care and center-based educators in an engaging, content-rich training.

**Note:** To view the video referenced in this guide, go to [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/). Select "Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning." Be sure you are able to stream the video prior to and while leading this training.

### Key Ideas

- Young toddlers are active learners. As they explore everything around them, they also develop a sense of themselves as independent people with their own agendas. Walking, running, climbing, banging, and manipulating objects are not only skills to master, they are tools for making things happen and finding things out.
- Young toddlers' curiosity and eagerness to explore can sometimes lead them into trouble. They are still learning about what they can and can't do, what is safe and what is not, and how their actions might affect others. For example, a young toddler may pull another child's hair simply out of curiosity or stand on a wobbly chair to look out a window. Educators who key in to young toddlers' curiosity and questions can use these teachable moments to help children understand how things work and accept limits on their activities.
- Most young toddlers are beginning to use words to communicate, though they understand a lot more than they are able to say. When talking, they may use single words, common phrases, or sound effects (such as "vroom-vroom"), with or without gestures, baby sign language, and babbles. Those babbles will eventually sound like sentences or questions as toddlers' vocabularies take off. Young toddlers will repeat new words, point to objects and ask "What's that?" and put words together to tell simple stories. Young toddlers need educators who understand their nonverbal and verbal

communications, patiently elicit and respond to their first words and first stories, and help them to expand their vocabularies and use their new words.

- Young toddlers are beginning to learn that people have their own intentions and feelings. As they follow, copy, and play near each other, they may develop friendships with other children. Two toddlers may prefer each other's company, do particular things together over and over, and be upset when separated. With their growing awareness of other people, young toddlers like to participate in what is going on and to "help" with simple tasks.
- Close educator-child relationships are important when teaching young toddlers. Young toddlers are learning to do things themselves, but they still rely upon trusted adults who understand their feelings and can help them cope with frustration. One minute, toddlers insist on doing something all by themselves. The next, they cling to familiar people, objects, places, and activities, asking for cuddling and reassurance.
- The things educators do every day as they engage children's curiosity—responding to their questions; helping them hold people, things, and events in mind when out of sight; and providing a comforting sense of order, routine, and predictability—build young toddlers' confidence as active learners. As educators extend children's learning with new books, songs, materials, and challenges; expand their vocabularies; and help them express themselves in positive ways, they build strong roots for language, literacy, and STEM learning.

## **Learning Goals**

After participating in this training, educators will be able to:

- Use conversation and guidance strategies to help toddlers express themselves in positive ways.
- Expand toddlers' language as they talk, read, and play with children one-on-one and in small groups.
- Plan a variety of interesting experiences that will engage young toddlers in exploring how things relate to each other as they pursue self-chosen activities.
- Reflect upon how their current practices support young toddlers' learning and identify ways to be more effective.
- Plan how they might partner with families to support their children's learning.

## Agenda

Introduction	10–15 minutes
Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning	15 minutes
Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways	15–20 minutes
Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together	15–20 minutes
BREAK (optional)	0–5 minutes
Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other	15–20 minutes
Try It	15 minutes
Wrap Up	5–10 minutes
<b>Total Time</b>	<b>90–120 minutes</b>

## Preparation

Before leading this training, you should:

- Watch the video and get to know the featured best practices.
- Read through the training module. Think about your own questions and how you might respond to your participants' questions. Become familiar with the key ideas (page 2) so that you can share them in a natural, conversational way and address any questions that might arise. You may want to use the Resources for Further Learning handout to support and extend your expertise.
- Obtain and test the technology you need to share the video with participants and make sure you have a reliable Internet connection during the training.
- Gather any props or materials needed for the Try It activity.
- Rehearse and fine-tune your presentation to “make it your own.” Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time.
- Create a packet with copies of the following handouts for each participant:
  - Self-Assessment
  - Learning Log
  - Try It
  - Best Practices
  - Learning Guidelines and Standards
  - Resources for Further Learning
  - Training Evaluation

- Consider working with a partner the first time you lead this training. You can learn from and support each other when preparing, practicing, and facilitating. After the training, you can reflect on participants' evaluations together.

### Facilitation Tips

Whether you're a new or experienced facilitator, these tips can help your training run smoothly.

- Arrive early to prepare the training room for optimal learning.
  - Place handout packets where participants check in.
  - Have pens or pencils, paper, and sticky notes or index cards on every table.
  - Check your technology setup to make sure the video plays without problems.
  - Create an area in the room (a "parking lot") where participants can submit questions (on sticky notes or index cards) that may be beyond the scope of the current discussion.
- Create a space that is inviting and comfortable.
  - Play soft music as people arrive.
  - Greet participants with a smile and a handshake. A personal introduction helps set the stage for collaboration and learning.
- Invite partner or small group discussion.
  - Before the training begins, invite educators to identify a partner. Explain that people learn best when they have a chance to talk about what they are learning or thinking.
  - Allow a few minutes for partners to introduce themselves to each other.
  - During the training, provide opportunities for partner interaction.
- Keep participants engaged.
  - Follow the "ten-two rule" as you present the training: Speak for no longer than ten minutes at a time and then provide participants at least two minutes of interaction or activity.
  - Avoid simply reading the talking points that have been provided. Become familiar with each point so that you can keep the training engaging, fluid, and conversational.

# Training

## Introduction

(10–15 minutes)

### Welcome Participants to the Training

- Introduce yourself and share your background and experience. You may want to mention why you enjoy working with toddlers and/or educators of toddlers.
- Announce the length of the training (1½–2 hours) and note other logistics, such as break times, restroom location, and so on.
- Review the agenda and explain the structure of the training.
  - Participants will watch a video that explores how experienced educators support young toddlers' learning.
  - Participants will then watch segments of the video again, each segment focusing on a different key idea.
  - After each segment, participants will briefly discuss the main points and reflect on what they have learned. You will share your expertise as you build on participants' insights and address their questions.
  - Participants will also have the opportunity to share and reflect on their own practices. They will try out some strategies and identify practices they would like to do more often or with more intention.
- Share the learning goals and objectives. Participants will:
  - Learn conversation and guidance strategies that help toddlers express themselves in positive ways.
  - Explore ways to expand toddlers' language as they talk, read, and play with children one-on-one and in small groups.
  - Examine and plan learning experiences that engage young toddlers in exploring how things relate to each other as they pursue self-chosen activities.
  - Reflect upon how their current practices support younger toddlers' learning and identify ways to be more effective.
  - Plan how they might partner with families to support their children's learning.

- Introduce the Learning Log.
  - The Learning Log includes questions to help participants identify best practices and distill the important points made in each video segment. The *viewing questions* help focus participants' observations on key themes and strategies. The *reflection questions* help participants draw connections to their own experiences.
  - The Learning Log can also be used to jot down notes, questions, and ideas.
- Explain the “parking lot”—if, during the training, participants have questions that are not addressed or are beyond the scope of the current discussion, they can quietly display them in the “parking lot.” Assure participants that you will address their questions either one-on-one or in the group. In the case that you don't know an answer, try to suggest a helpful resource.
- Do an icebreaker activity to introduce participants to this module's themes and to get them ready to learn and interact. Play The Mystery Game to participants asking questions with and without words.

### The Mystery Game

- **Materials needed for each team:** a small box or opaque container (such as a shoe box, milk carton, or paper grocery bag); a small, irregularly-shaped object or collection of objects (such as a set of keys, a toy vehicle, a measuring spoon set, a small bean bag, a pair of chopsticks or drumsticks, a wooden block, or a change purse full of pennies).
- Explain to participants that young toddlers are beginning to develop a sense of themselves as individuals with their own wants, questions, and stories, though many don't yet have the language to express themselves or ask what they want to know. The Mystery Game will challenge participants to express themselves in positive ways and ask questions with and without words.
- Group participants into teams of 4–7 members.
- Have each group choose one “educator” to answer questions.
- Give all other participants a piece of paper or an index card with one of the following messages (for larger groups, count off by threes and assign one message to each number).
  - Use actions or gestures—but no words.
  - Use single words—but no word combinations or sentences.
  - Use language—but do not touch the box.

## Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

---

- Give each designated educator a box containing a small object or collection of objects. Instruct the educator to peek inside the box before the game begins.
  - When you say, "Go," the members of each group can manipulate the box or ask questions to try to discover what is inside. Remind participants to follow the messages on their papers. (Those who can't use any words or only single words can touch the box; those who can use language are not allowed to touch the box.)
  - Stop the game after 5 minutes or after each group has guessed what is in their box, whichever comes first. Ask participants to talk about their successes and frustrations. How might the activity help them empathize with curious toddlers who are just learning to talk?
- After the icebreaker activity, ask each participant to identify a partner to work with during the training and encourage them to share ideas. (You can offer small group discussions if you prefer.)

### Complete the Self-Assessment

Educators grow and hone their skills by continually identifying their own strengths and training needs and reflecting on their own practices.

- Invite participants to complete the first half of the Self-Assessment to help them discover the skills they already possess and to identify those they would like to work on.
- Explain that toward the end of the training, participants will complete the second half of the Self-Assessment to measure their growth and learning.

## Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning (15 minutes)

### Introduce the Topic

Young toddlers are active learners. Walking, jumping, climbing, balancing, and manipulating objects are not only skills to master, they are also tools for finding things out. Curious toddlers may touch and taste, pull, throw, and climb—just to see what might happen or what they can discover. But they are still learning what is safe and acceptable. Tuned-in educators can show toddlers that they value their curiosity, while also helping them to explore and interact in safe ways. Educators can provide interesting learning opportunities while also helping toddlers to understand the potential consequences of their actions and to accept necessary limits.

As they pursue their curiosity, young toddlers will want to do things by themselves and in their own way. They are developing a sense of *autonomy*, a sense that they can make choices and direct their own behavior. At the same time, they also need a lot of emotional support and guidance. Educators can give young toddlers the structure they need to feel secure and behave

appropriately. Familiar items in familiar places, simple daily routines and activity patterns, and trusted adults who help them manage their feelings help toddlers to be confident, active learners who are proud of what they know and can do.

### Introduce and View the Video

Introduce the video featuring Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College.

In this video, Professor Villegas-Reimers explains how young toddlers explore everything around them, while also learning to express their wishes and feelings and to make choices for themselves. Participants will follow center-based educators Eileen, Kristen, and their colleagues, and Kathy, a family child care educator, as they help toddlers express themselves in positive ways, expand their language, and support their discoveries.



"Supporting Young Toddlers' Learning" (07:25)

Explain that participants will view the video as a whole, discuss it briefly, and then look at specific strategies in more depth. Ask participants to pay close attention to how educators help children master new skills and feel good about what they know and can do as the children participate in group activities and as they pursue their own agendas.

### Group Discussion

Ask a few volunteers to share something they noticed or wondered about as they watched the video. Encourage others to respond. Link participants' contributions to the key ideas and learning goals (pages 2–3) as you note what you will be exploring in more depth during the training. Put questions that are not directly related to the main ideas in the "parking lot" so you can be sure to address them later.

## Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways (15–20 minutes)

### Introduce the Best Practice

Young toddlers are active, inquisitive learners who often want to choose their own activities and to do things for themselves. They are full of curiosity, energy, and strong feelings. They are just beginning to learn to control their outbursts of frustration or excitement and may need help to express themselves in positive ways. Toddlers like to feel in charge and in control—they want to make choices for themselves.

Sharing a coveted item or taking turns is particularly difficult for young toddlers. *Mine* is a new and important word. From a toddler's point of view: "If I have it, it's mine. If I had it and put it down, it's mine. If I want it, it's mine." But young toddlers are also capable of sensitivity, kindness, and generosity. A skilled educator can tap into these qualities as she helps toddlers learn to resolve inevitable conflicts with other children.

- **Model empathy.** Give toddlers words for their strong feelings and comfort them when they are upset. Acknowledge a child's own feelings as you help him recognize what another child may be feeling. When children disagree, help them to calm down, recognize each other's feelings and desires, and find a solution that makes them both happy.
- **Offer simple choices.** Give toddlers time to say or show what they want. For example, an educator might ask, "Would you like to carry the bucket?" or "Would you like the red shovel or the green shovel?" Adults tend to use more specific language when they offer a child a choice instead of telling him what to do, and toddlers are more likely to use language as they respond. In addition, a toddler is often more willing to do what an adult requests when he has made the choice on his own.
- **Use positive guidance strategies.** Young toddlers are still learning safe and appropriate behavior. They need limits and they need to test them. But educators don't like to say "no" all the time, and toddlers don't like to hear it. In fact, research shows that toddlers learn less language when they hear mostly what *not* to do. When adults use *positive guidance* strategies (such as encouraging words, questions, explanations, and teaching polite, kind, and safe behavior), they use richer language and invite responses. When toddlers hear "yes" more often than "no," their language develops more fully and more quickly, and they learn to use their words to express their feelings and ask for what they want.

### Introduce and View the Video

Invite participants to watch again as Kristin and Eileen help toddlers cope with strong emotions, make choices, and resolve conflicts. In addition to supporting toddlers' autonomy by acknowledging their feelings and offering them choices, Kristin and Eileen use a number of positive guidance strategies.

Begin at 0:52 when Kristin says, "Come here. I know you want the corn" and end at 2:40 when Eileen says, "Come on up." Ask participants these questions to guide their viewing:

- *As you watch, what do you notice about how the educators respond to children's communications and their expressions of strong emotion?*
- *What do you notice about the ways the educators help the children make choices?*
- *What other positive guidance strategies do the educators use?*

## Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

---

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* or *I wonder if...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

### Group Discussion

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use some of the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

#### *How can educators help toddlers who are overly excited, upset, angry, or frustrated express their feelings appropriately?*

- Educators can:
  - Acknowledge the child's feelings.
  - Give the child words for what he seems to be trying to express.
  - Physically comfort, support, and contain the child gently and affectionately.
  - Offer the child a choice to do something. (For example, in the video Kristin asks, "Do you want to hold the grapes?")

#### *What benefits do toddlers gain when educators offer them choices?*

- Toddlers gain the following benefits:
  - They hear and use more language.
  - They feel respected as individuals.
  - They strengthen their relationship with the educator.

#### *How can educators help toddlers recognize and consider each other's feelings and desires?*

- Educators can:
  - Acknowledge the child's own feelings.
  - Point out or describe how another child may feel or what he seems to want. (For example, in the video Eileen says, "He's waiting for a turn.")

- Show pride and pleasure when commenting upon children's sensitivity to others ("Oh! You knew that Kai was looking for a yellow egg!"), and tell families about these special moments.
- Help children to acknowledge each other's kind acts.
- Encourage budding friendships by giving children chances to play together in their favorite ways, and tell families about their children's growing friendships.

***How can educators help young toddlers to share or take turns with toys?***

- Educators can:
  - Provide enough duplicate or similar items so that children do not have to share or take turns all of the time.
  - Be empathetic. Acknowledge a child's strong desire to keep, take, or hoard toys, before trying to enlist her cooperation.
  - Enlist children's cooperation by offering choices, within limits. ("When you're all done with the egg, could you give it to Kai?")
  - Remind a child of another child's feelings. ("He's waiting for a turn.")
  - Provide options for solving the problem.
  - Acknowledge kindness and sharing. ("That was really nice of you to consider Kai.")
  - Play turn-taking games, such as handing items back and forth or taking turns throwing things into a basket.
  - Encourage trading one toy for another rather than taking turns or sharing.
  - Offer toys such as large balls and rocking boats that are more fun to use with a partner.
  - Give the child who is waiting a sand glass or windup kitchen timer that will hold her interest. Over time, children can learn to work timers and to use them on their own.

***How can educators support young toddlers' considerate behavior?***

- Educators can:
  - Model considerate behavior in their relationships with other adults.
  - Model considerate behavior as they interact with children.

- Teach children words that describe feelings; help them put their feelings into words.
- Teach polite words and actions.
- Teach children simple words (or signs) to use when another child does something they don't like.
- Provide a comfortable, predictable, low-stress environment and a rhythm to the day, respecting each child's unique needs for stimulation, relaxation, and a balance of active and quiet activities. (Conflicts are most likely to occur when children are tired, hungry, or overexcited. It is especially hard for young toddlers to express themselves in positive ways and be considerate of others when they are feeling stressed.)

### View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

### Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they've learned about helping young toddlers express themselves in positive ways and what they do in their own program. Ask educators to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

## Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together (15–20 minutes)

### Introduce the Best Practice

Language explodes during the young toddler period. At first, children may use actions, gestures, signs, and babble talk to communicate and say few, if any, words. They understand a lot more than they are able to say, however, and may show this by following simple directions. Soon, they will communicate with single words, then put words together, and then finally speak (or sign) in full sentences—often in more than one language! To support this growth, it is especially important for educators and families to provide young toddlers with many language-building opportunities.

- **Talk *with* children and give them time to respond.** A young toddler may take up to 5 seconds to put her thoughts into words. Young toddlers also need time to process what you say. Use short, simple sentences, especially when the child is expected to follow a direction, respond to a question, or learn a new word. But toddlers also need to hear more complex language that stretches their abilities. A tuned-in educator can add just

enough challenge by listening intently to a child's verbal and nonverbal communications, putting the child's communications into fuller sentences, and building on the child's ideas.

- **Use interesting words and phrases that will expand toddlers' vocabularies.** Most young toddlers are eager to learn new words. In fact, a word for "What's that?" or "Look at that?" is often among the first 50 words children say. Pairing new words with actions, signs, pictures, or real objects helps to make their meaning clear. Repeating the words themselves helps toddlers to remember them. When families and educators keep each other informed about a toddler's new words, they can better understand what he may be trying to say. They can also help the toddler to hear and use a word in different situations and to connect it with a range of experiences and ideas.
- **Use books and songs to extend language and concepts.** Books and songs introduce words, concepts, information, and language forms that children may not otherwise encounter. Books often include unusual words or phrasings, descriptive language, and names for items that children may not interact with in their everyday worlds. Popular toddler songs often highlight categories such as body parts, colors, and farm animals, and concepts such as counting, directions, and opposites. Educators can also make up new song verses or put new words to familiar tunes so that children can practice new words, concepts, and actions.
- **Read books one-to-one or in small groups, in ways that encourage active involvement.** The real power of reading with toddlers is in the conversations that a book sparks. When educators read with individual children or very small groups, children can point out and name pictures, act out story events, ask and answer questions, repeat words and phrases that are fun to say, and, with an educator's help, make connections to related experiences.
- **Talk, read, and play with children in *all* of their languages.** Young toddlers can learn two or more languages if they have frequent opportunities to both hear and use them. Learning more than one language can help toddlers stay connected with family and community members and traditions. It also contributes to skills like memory, focus, and flexible thinking.

These rich language experiences build a strong foundation for the rapid language and intellectual growth that happens during the next two years.

### Introduce and View the Video

In this video segment, participants will see educators extending young toddlers' language during one-to-one moments like hand washing, while sharing books with one or two children, and while reading or singing songs with larger groups.

Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

---

Begin at 2:40 when Eileen says, "Come on up" and end at 4:51 as Kathy and the children finish singing. Use these questions to guide their viewing:

- *As you watch, what do you notice about how the educators seize opportunities to expand children's language?*
- *How do the educators help children connect new words and concepts to pictures, actions, or events in a story or song? How do they help them make connections to prior experiences as they follow a story?*
- *What other strategies do the educators use to engage toddlers in language-building conversations?*

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* or *I wonder if...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

**Option:** You may choose to lead the Try It activity (page 21) now to enrich the following group discussion.

### Group Discussion

Share and expand on key points covered in the video (and the Try It activity, if appropriate). Use some of the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

***How can educators help young toddlers who are just beginning to use words to communicate? How can they expand their language?***

- Educators can:
  - Listen patiently and respond to anything that sounds like a word.
  - Ask a child to show what she means if she does not have the words to say it.
  - Respond with words to what it seems a child is trying to say.
  - Repeat what the child communicated, and add a little bit more information.
  - Pair words with actions, objects, pictures, or context clues that make their meaning clear.
  - Use an engaging voice and facial expressions to show interest in what a toddler has to say.

- Speak clearly, using simple sentences and checking to make sure that a toddler is following along and seems to understand.
- Use rich language in situations where it comes naturally. Include words that may be beyond typical toddler vocabulary (such as *scrub*, *penguin*, and *delivery person*).
- Give toddlers time to repeat new words.
- Find many opportunities for one-on-one conversation and language expansion.
- Extend conversations through several exchanges. Build on a toddler's ideas.
- Stay in close touch with families so both educators and families know the words or signs a toddler uses and the experiences he may want to talk about (in his home language and in the educator's, if they are different).

***How can educators share books with young toddlers in ways that encourage their active involvement and expand their language?***

- Educators can:
  - Read with children one-to-one or in small groups so that children can ask questions, actively participate, and engage in back-and-forth conversation.
  - Let toddlers choose books to be read aloud.
  - Read favorite books over and over so that children become familiar with them.
  - Select books that depict or describe actions toddlers might want to imitate or silly rhymes they might want to repeat.
  - Act out words or parts of the story together with children.
  - Read with expression and use different voices and sound effects.
  - Pause to let toddlers repeat or fill in words and sound effects they know.
  - Name pictures that toddlers point to, ask about, or seem interested in, and ask them to point to pictures or details as they are named.
  - Give toddlers a chance to repeat new words and phrases.
  - Ask open-ended questions about the pictures, characters, or story events.
  - Draw connections between pictures, words, and events in the books and children's experiences.
  - Encourage and respond to toddlers' questions.
  - Talk about characters' feelings.

- Ask toddlers what they think and build on their ideas.
- Remember that reading doesn't have to happen while sitting down, at circle time, or even inside. Educators and toddlers can even make up the words. With toddlers, books are springboards for conversation and play. Use them frequently and have fun together!

*What songs, movement games, and finger plays do you like to share with young toddlers? How do you introduce words and concepts you might want young toddlers to learn as you do these activities together? (Option: Ask a volunteer to teach one to the group.)*

### **View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

### **Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they've learned about expanding young toddlers' language and what they do in their own program. Ask educators to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

## **Break (optional)**

**(0–5 minutes)**

## **Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other**

**(15–20 minutes)**

### **Introduce the Best Practice**

As they play with toys, tools, containers, and interesting materials, young toddlers explore and discover relationships. They might notice that a small pan can fit inside a large pan and that the larger pan can hold more plastic eggs than the smaller pan. They might discover that two paint colors combine to make a third color.

Following their own agendas, young toddlers may line up all of the toy cars or group stuffed animals into families with parents and babies. As they fit simple puzzles together or figure out how to cover a large interlocking block with smaller ones, they discover and confirm how things can be whole, in pieces, and back together again. They are learning how the world works. Educators can support these discoveries by providing appropriate materials, noticing what toddlers focus on, talking with them about what they are doing or trying to figure out, asking

questions to guide their exploration and thinking, and occasionally offering guidance or a new challenge.

- **Offer opportunities for children to fit, compare, sort, combine, and count things.** Provide puzzles such as shape sorters, ring stackers, nesting cups, and pots with lids. Help toddlers notice what is bigger or smaller, what fits inside what, and what can hold more. Offer interesting combinations of materials, tools, and containers, and talk about what toddlers do with them, how they solve problems they encounter, and what they discover. Let them mix materials, such as different colored paints or sand and water, and discover what new things they can make. Help them notice relationships by talking about how things are alike or go together. (For example, “Daffodils and buttercups are yellow flowers.” Or, “You found a big truck and a smaller one. Can you drive them to the garage?”)
- **Celebrate children’s discoveries.** Praise can feel empty when the agenda belongs to the educator and the goal is following directions or finding a right answer. But young toddlers beam with delight when educators they love share their pride and excitement at something they have done or discovered themselves. Experiences like these build toddlers’ sense of themselves as competent explorers and communicators and confident, self-directed, intentional learners.

### Introduce and View the Video

In this video segment, participants will see how Kathy, Kristin, and their colleagues offer children interesting items and materials to explore and combine; help them discover mathematical, spatial, and causal relationships; and celebrate their discoveries with them.

Begin at 4:51 when Kathy and the children begin to explore with plastic eggs and watch to the end. Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:

- *As you watch, what do you notice about how Kathy helps a child understand the concepts of bigger and smaller and more and less as she plays with objects from the sensory bin?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators expand children’s language as they support their explorations of how objects and materials can relate and combine?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators let children take the lead and help them feel good about themselves and what they can do?*

**Partner/Small Group Share**

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* or *I wonder if...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

**Group Discussion**

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use some of the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

***How can educators help young toddlers to explore science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts and to make discoveries about how the world works?***

- Educators can:
  - Offer toys and materials that behave in interesting ways when acted upon; for example, by winding up, pushing buttons, combining, scooping, sifting, blowing, pounding, stretching, rolling, and so on.
  - Put out a few materials that enable children to explore a particular idea, such as motion and propulsion, color mixing, emptying and filling, size and shape, quantity, floating and sinking, or how materials can change states.
  - Display learning materials in an attractive, orderly way so that children can find what they want to use and get things themselves.
  - Use outdoor time for focused exploration as well as for active play. For example, toddlers might make “mud soup,” drop pebbles in puddles, send different objects down a slide, or walk across surfaces such as leaf piles, snow, and soft sand.

***How can educators use language to support and extend young toddlers' discoveries, without interrupting their autonomous exploration?***

- Educators can:
  - Approach children's explorations with curiosity to find out what they might be thinking.
  - Watch, wait, and wonder. Ask, “What is this child trying to do or find out?” Then find a way to join the play that builds on the child's agenda.
  - Take care not to impose an agenda when offering help or starting conversation. For example, don't quiz a child about the color of the cups that he is stacking or using to “feed” his dinosaur.

- Put words to what children communicate with actions or signs, and expand their single and simplified sentences with a bit more language and information.
- Use specific and interesting vocabulary to refer to objects and actions.
- Encourage and answer children's questions.
- Ask genuine questions, whose answers you really want to know, about what children are doing, trying to do, creating, or finding out, even if children can only answer with actions or single words.
- Offer an additional challenge or material; show children how to use tools.
- Celebrate children's discoveries with them. Show pride in their accomplishments and use specific language to describe what they did.

### ***How can educators help young toddlers feel good about themselves?***

- Educators can:
  - Show that they value children's opinions as they engage them in conversation.
  - Show that they share their delight in children's discoveries and accomplishments.
  - Give children time to master self-chosen tasks and skills as they repeat activities that they find engaging over and over again.
  - Offer challenges that are just a step above what children can do, so that they can succeed through their own efforts.
  - Give children opportunities to be helpful, such as getting an item for another child or helping to clean up a spill.
  - Be specific with praise, and focus on what children have done on their own initiative rather than at the educator's request.
  - Use positive guidance strategies to build children's self-control, language, and social skills, along with their confidence and self-esteem.

### **View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

### **Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they've learned about offering young toddlers interesting things to explore and talk about and what they do in their own program. Ask educators to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

## Try It

**(15 minutes)**

The Try It activity helps educators think about how to apply new ideas to their own programs. Ask participants to work with one or two partners and direct their attention to the Try It handout.

## Read With Me

Educators will practice ways of reading with young toddlers that encourage their active involvement and expand their language.

*Materials needed:* a young toddler book for each pair or group (Ask a librarian or early educator to help you select books that provide both interesting vocabulary and interesting things for toddlers to do. Choose books in participants' home languages when possible, and that include characters of diverse backgrounds.)

- Review with participants the toddler involvement strategies on the Try It handout. Ask for volunteers to demonstrate any that may be unclear.
- Give each pair or small group a young toddler book.
- Ask group members to take turns being the “educator” and reading to the “toddlers.” Those in the role of educator should take a few moments to familiarize themselves with a few pages of the book. They should then share those pages with the toddlers in a way that engages their participation. The toddlers should respond appropriately. Educators can use the strategies listed in the handout or other strategies that feel natural and appropriate to them.

## Wrap Up

**(5–10 minutes)**

- Give participants an opportunity to share something they noticed or wondered about as they watched the segments of the video or participated in the Try It activity. Address any questions that arise, as well as questions in the “parking lot” that would add to the group’s experience.
- Invite participants to complete the second half of the “Self-Assessment” and then measure their growth and learning.
- Ask participants to look over their notes from the training and jot down three things that they want to remember from today in their Learning Log.
- Invite partners or small groups to meet and share their three “keepers.” Then ask a few participants to share their “keepers” with the larger group.
- Thank participants for attending. Remind them that they can re-view the video and get lots of activity ideas at Resources for Learning:  
<http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/>.

- Encourage them to fill out and return the Training Evaluation.

### Glossary

**autonomy:** ability to make decisions for oneself and direct one's own behavior

**empathy:** ability to recognize, share, understand, and consider another person's feelings

**positive guidance:** helping a child learn good behaviors and self control



# Self-Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Before the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your current comfort level.

**After the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your new comfort level.

1 = Very uncomfortable 2 = Uncomfortable 3 = Neutral 4 = Comfortable 5 = Very comfortable

	Before					After				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>General</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Support young toddlers in doing things themselves, while learning to consider others.										
Partner with families of young toddlers to support their children's learning.										
<b>Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Help young toddlers to express their wishes and feelings with words and/or signs.										
Help young toddlers to make choices.										
Use positive guidance strategies to help toddlers learn to get along with each other.										
<b>Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Have many engaging back-and-forth conversations with every child in the group throughout the day.										
Read books with young toddlers in ways that engage their active participation.										
Expand young toddlers' vocabularies and their knowledge of things beyond their immediate world.										
<b>Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Offer young toddlers interesting toys, materials, and tools for exploring cause/effect and size/space relationships.										
Use language to help young toddlers explore materials and concepts in new ways and to celebrate their discoveries.										
Help young toddlers develop a positive sense of self as they pursue their own agendas, interact with others, and discover how the world works.										



# Learning Log

## Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways

### View

In the video:

- *What do you notice about how the educators respond to children's communications and their expressions of strong emotion?*
- *What do you notice about the ways the educators help the children make choices?*
- *What other positive guidance strategies do the educators use?*

### Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you help toddlers express themselves in positive ways as they explore materials and interact with other children?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

### Notes

### Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together

#### View

In the video:

- *What do you notice about how the educators seize opportunities to expand children's language?*
- *How do the educators help children connect new words and concepts to pictures, actions, or events in a story or song? How do they help them make connections to prior experiences as they follow a story?*
- *What other strategies do the educators use to engage toddlers in language-building conversations?*

#### Reflect

In your program:

- *When do you find opportunities for one-to-one conversations? How do you expand toddlers' language as you talk, read, and play together?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

#### Notes

### Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other

#### View

In the video:

- *What do you notice about how Kathy helps a child understand the concepts of bigger and smaller and more and less as she plays with objects from the sensory bin?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators expand children's language as they support their explorations of how objects and materials can relate and combine?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators let children take the lead and help them feel good about themselves and what they can do?*

#### Reflect

In your program:

- *What opportunities do you provide for children to learn how the world works by exploring spatial and cause-and-effect relationships, seeing what happens when they combine materials, and fitting things together?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

#### Notes



## Try It

### Read With Me

#### **Practice ways of reading with young toddlers that enlist their active involvement and expand their language.**

The workshop leader will provide a young toddler book. Work with one or two partners. Take turns being the educator while other group members pretend to be young toddlers. As the educator, take a few moments to familiarize yourself with a few pages of the book and think of how you might share them with toddlers (refer to the list of toddler engagement strategies below for some ideas). Then read the pages to your partners or “young toddlers” in a way that engages their active participation.

Pass the book to the next educator, who should read the next few pages. The next educator should try to use a different or additional toddler engagement technique.

Continue taking turns until you finish the book.

Try some of these toddler engagement strategies, along with others that may be especially appropriate for the book you have been given:

- Act out words or parts of the story together.
- Read with expression. Use different voices and sound effects.
- Pause to let toddlers repeat or fill in words and sound effects they know.
- Name pictures that toddlers point to, ask about, or seem interested in, and ask them to point to pictures or details that you name.
- Give toddlers a chance to repeat new words and phrases.
- Ask open-ended questions about the pictures, characters, or story events.
- Draw connections between pictures, words, and events in the books and children’s experiences.
- Encourage and respond to toddlers’ questions.
- Talk about characters’ feelings.
- Ask toddlers what they think about the story, characters, or events, and build on their ideas.



## Best Practices

Young toddlers are active learners. Walking, jumping, climbing, balancing, and manipulating objects are not only skills to master, they are also tools for finding things out. Curious toddlers may touch and taste, pull, throw, and climb—just to see what might happen or what they can discover. But they are still learning what is safe and acceptable. Tuned-in educators can show toddlers that they value their curiosity, while also helping them to explore and interact in safe ways. Educators can provide interesting learning opportunities while also helping toddlers to understand the potential consequences of their actions and to accept necessary limits.

As they pursue their curiosity, young toddlers will want to do things by themselves and in their own way. They are developing a sense of *autonomy*, a sense that they can make choices and direct their own behavior. At the same time, they also need a lot of emotional support and guidance. Educators can give young toddlers the structure they need to feel secure and behave appropriately. Familiar items in familiar places, simple daily routines and activity patterns, and trusted adults who help them manage their feelings help toddlers to be confident, active learners who are proud of what they know and can do.

## Help Toddlers Express Themselves in Positive Ways

Young toddlers are active, inquisitive learners who often want to choose their own activities and to do things for themselves. They are full of curiosity, energy, and strong feelings. They are just beginning to learn to control their outbursts of frustration or excitement and may need help to express themselves in positive ways. Toddlers like to feel in charge and in control—they want to make choices for themselves.

Sharing a coveted item or taking turns is particularly difficult for young toddlers. *Mine* is a new and important word. From a toddler's point of view: "If I have it, it's mine. If I had it and put it down, it's mine. If I want it, it's mine." But young toddlers are also capable of sensitivity, kindness, and generosity. A skilled educator can tap into these qualities as she helps toddlers learn to resolve inevitable conflicts with other children.

- **Model empathy.** Give toddlers words for their strong feelings and comfort them when they are upset. Acknowledge a child's own feelings as you help him recognize what another child may be feeling. When children disagree, help them to calm down, recognize each other's feelings and desires, and find a solution that makes them both happy.
- **Offer simple choices.** Give toddlers time to say or show what they want. For example, an educator might ask, "Would you like to carry the bucket?" or "Would you like the red shovel or the green shovel?" Adults tend to use more specific language when they offer

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

---

a child a choice instead of telling him what to do, and toddlers are more likely to use language as they respond. In addition, a toddler is often more willing to do what an adult requests when he has made the choice on his own.

- **Use positive guidance strategies.** Young toddlers are still learning safe and appropriate behavior. They need limits and they need to test them. But educators don't like to say "no" all the time, and toddlers don't like to hear it. In fact, research shows that toddlers learn less language when they hear mostly what *not* to do. When adults use *positive guidance* strategies (such as encouraging words, questions, explanations, and teaching polite, kind, and safe behavior), they use richer language and invite responses. When toddlers hear "yes" more often than "no," their language develops more fully and more quickly, and they learn to use their words to express their feelings and ask for what they want.

### **How can educators help toddlers who are overly excited, upset, angry, or frustrated express their feelings appropriately?**

- Educators can:
  - Acknowledge the child's feelings.
  - Give the child words for what he seems to be trying to express.
  - Physically comfort, support, and contain the child gently and affectionately.
  - Offer the child a choice to do something. (For example, in the video Kristin asks, "Do you want to hold the grapes?")

### **What benefits do toddlers gain when educators offer them choices?**

- Toddlers gain the following benefits:
  - They hear and use more language.
  - They feel respected as individuals.
  - They strengthen their relationship with the educator.

### **How can educators help toddlers recognize and consider each other's feelings and desires?**

- Educators can:
  - Acknowledge the child's own feelings.

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

---

- Point out or describe how another child may feel or what he seems to want. (For example, in the video Eileen says, “He’s waiting for a turn.”)
- Show pride and pleasure when commenting upon children’s sensitivity to others (“Oh! You knew that Kai was looking for a yellow egg!”), and tell families about these special moments.
- Help children to acknowledge each other’s kind acts.
- Encourage budding friendships by giving children chances to play together in their favorite ways, and tell families about their children’s growing friendships.

### **How can educators help young toddlers to share or take turns with toys?**

- Educators can:
  - Provide enough duplicate or similar items so that children do not have to share or take turns all of the time.
  - Be empathetic. Acknowledge a child’s strong desire to keep, take, or hoard toys, before trying to enlist her cooperation.
  - Enlist children’s cooperation by offering choices, within limits. (“When you’re all done with the egg, could you give it to Kai?”)
  - Remind a child of another child’s feelings. (“He’s waiting for a turn.”)
  - Provide options for solving the problem.
  - Acknowledge kindness and sharing. (“That was really nice of you to consider Kai.”)
  - Play turn-taking games, such as handing items back and forth or taking turns throwing things into a basket.
  - Encourage trading one toy for another rather than taking turns or sharing.
  - Offer toys such as large balls and rocking boats that are more fun to use with a partner.
  - Give the child who is waiting a sand glass or windup kitchen timer that will hold her interest. Over time, children can learn to work timers and to use them on their own.

## How can educators support young toddlers' considerate behavior?

- Educators can:
  - Model considerate behavior in their relationships with other adults.
  - Model considerate behavior as they interact with children.
  - Teach children words that describe feelings; help them put their feelings into words.
  - Teach polite words and actions.
  - Teach children simple words (or signs) to use when another child does something they don't like.
  - Provide a comfortable, predictable, low-stress environment and a rhythm to the day, respecting each child's unique needs for stimulation, relaxation, and a balance of active and quiet activities. (Conflicts are most likely to occur when children are tired, hungry, or overexcited. It is especially hard for young toddlers to express themselves in positive ways and be considerate of others when they are feeling stressed.)

## Expand Toddlers' Language as You Talk, Read, and Play Together

Language explodes during the young toddler period. At first, children may use actions, gestures, signs, and babble talk to communicate and say few, if any, words. They understand a lot more than they are able to say, however, and may show this by following simple directions. Soon, they will communicate with single words, then put words together, and then finally speak (or sign) in full sentences—often in more than one language! To support this growth, it is especially important for educators and families to provide young toddlers with many language-building opportunities.

- **Talk *with* children and give them time to respond.** A young toddler may take up to 5 seconds to put her thoughts into words. Young toddlers also need time to process what you say. Use short, simple sentences, especially when the child is expected to follow a direction, respond to a question, or learn a new word. But toddlers also need to hear more complex language that stretches their abilities. A tuned-in educator can add just enough challenge by listening intently to a child's verbal and nonverbal communications, putting the child's communications into fuller sentences, and building on the child's ideas.

- **Use interesting words and phrases that will expand toddlers' vocabularies.** Most young toddlers are eager to learn new words. In fact, a word for “What’s that?” or “Look at that?” is often among the first 50 words children say. Pairing new words with actions, signs, pictures, or real objects helps to make their meaning clear. Repeating the words themselves helps toddlers to remember them. When families and educators keep each other informed about a toddler’s new words, they can better understand what he may be trying to say. They can also help the toddler to hear and use a word in different situations and to connect it with a range of experiences and ideas.
- **Use books and songs to extend language and concepts.** Books and songs introduce words, concepts, information, and language forms that children may not otherwise encounter. Books often include unusual words or phrasings, descriptive language, and names for items that children may not interact with in their everyday worlds. Popular toddler songs often highlight categories such as body parts, colors, and farm animals, and concepts such as counting, directions, and opposites. Educators can also make up new song verses or put new words to familiar tunes so that children can practice new words, concepts, and actions.
- **Read books one-to-one or in small groups, in ways that encourage active involvement.** The real power of reading with toddlers is in the conversations that a book sparks. When educators read with individual children or very small groups, children can point out and name pictures, act out story events, ask and answer questions, repeat words and phrases that are fun to say, and, with an educator’s help, make connections to related experiences.
- **Talk, read, and play with children in *all* of their languages.** Young toddlers can learn two or more languages if they have frequent opportunities to both hear and use them. Learning more than one language can help toddlers stay connected with family and community members and traditions. It also contributes to skills like memory, focus, and flexible thinking.

These rich language experiences build a strong foundation for the rapid language and intellectual growth that happens during the next two years.

### **How can educators help young toddlers who are just beginning to use words to communicate? How can they expand their language?**

- Educators can:
  - Listen patiently and respond to anything that sounds like a word.
  - Ask a child to show what she means if she does not have the words to say it.
  - Respond with words to what it seems a child is trying to say.

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

---

- Repeat what the child communicated, and add a little bit more information.
- Pair words with actions, objects, pictures, or context clues that make their meaning clear.
- Use an engaging voice and facial expressions to show interest in what a toddler has to say.
- Speak clearly, using simple sentences and checking to make sure that a toddler is following along and seems to understand.
- Use rich language in situations where it comes naturally. Include words that may be beyond typical toddler vocabulary (such as *scrub*, *penguin*, and *delivery person*).
- Give toddlers time to repeat new words.
- Find many opportunities for one-on-one conversation and language expansion.
- Extend conversations through several exchanges. Build on a toddler's ideas.
- Stay in close touch with families so both educators and families know the words or signs a toddler uses and the experiences he may want to talk about (in his home language and in the educator's, if they are different).

### **How can educators share books with young toddlers in ways that encourage their active involvement and expand their language?**

- Educators can:
  - Read with children one-to-one or in small groups so that children can ask questions, actively participate, and engage in back-and-forth conversation.
  - Let toddlers choose books to be read aloud.
  - Read favorite books over and over so that children become familiar with them.
  - Select books that depict or describe actions toddlers might want to imitate or silly rhymes they might want to repeat.
  - Act out words or parts of the story together with children.
  - Read with expression and use different voices and sound effects.
  - Pause to let toddlers repeat or fill in words and sound effects they know.
  - Name pictures that toddlers point to, ask about, or seem interested in, and ask them to point to pictures or details as they are named.
  - Give toddlers a chance to repeat new words and phrases.

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

---

- Ask open-ended questions about the pictures, characters, or story events.
- Draw connections between pictures, words, and events in the books and children's experiences.
- Encourage and respond to toddlers' questions.
- Talk about characters' feelings.
- Ask toddlers what they think and build on their ideas.
- Remember that reading doesn't have to happen while sitting down, at circle time, or even inside. Educators and toddlers can even make up the words. With toddlers, books are springboards for conversation and play. Use them frequently and have fun together!

## Help Toddlers Explore How Things Relate to Each Other

As they play with toys, tools, containers, and interesting materials, young toddlers explore and discover relationships. They might notice that a small pan can fit inside a large pan and that the larger pan can hold more plastic eggs than the smaller pan. They might discover that two paint colors combine to make a third color.

Following their own agendas, young toddlers may line up all of the toy cars or group stuffed animals into families with parents and babies. As they fit simple puzzles together or figure out how to cover a large interlocking block with smaller ones, they discover and confirm how things can be whole, in pieces, and back together again. They are learning how the world works. Educators can support these discoveries by providing appropriate materials, noticing what toddlers focus on, talking with them about what they are doing or trying to figure out, asking questions to guide their exploration and thinking, and occasionally offering guidance or a new challenge.

- **Offer opportunities for children to fit, compare, sort, combine, and count things.** Provide puzzles such as shape sorters, ring stackers, nesting cups, and pots with lids. Help toddlers notice what is bigger or smaller, what fits inside what, and what can hold more. Offer interesting combinations of materials, tools, and containers, and talk about what toddlers do with them, how they solve problems they encounter, and what they discover. Let them mix materials, such as different colored paints or sand and water, and discover what new things they can make. Help them notice relationships by talking about how things are alike or go together. (For example, "Daffodils and buttercups are yellow flowers." Or, "You found a big truck and a smaller one. Can you drive them to the garage?")
- **Celebrate children's discoveries.** Praise can feel empty when the agenda belongs to the educator and the goal is following directions or finding a right answer. But young

toddlers beam with delight when educators they love share their pride and excitement at something they have done or discovered themselves. Experiences like these build toddlers' sense of themselves as competent explorers and communicators and confident, self-directed, intentional learners.

### **How can educators help young toddlers to explore science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts and to make discoveries about how the world works?**

- Educators can:
  - Offer toys and materials that behave in interesting ways when acted upon; for example, by winding up, pushing buttons, combining, scooping, sifting, blowing, pounding, stretching, rolling, and so on.
  - Put out a few materials that enable children to explore a particular idea, such as motion and propulsion, color mixing, emptying and filling, size and shape, quantity, floating and sinking, or how materials can change states.
  - Display learning materials in an attractive, orderly way so that children can find what they want to use and get things themselves.
  - Use outdoor time for focused exploration as well as for active play. For example, toddlers might make “mud soup,” drop pebbles in puddles, send different objects down a slide, or walk across surfaces such as leaf piles, snow, and soft sand.

### **How can educators use language to support and extend young toddlers' discoveries, without interrupting their autonomous exploration?**

- Educators can:
  - Approach children's explorations with curiosity to find out what they might be thinking.
  - Watch, wait, and wonder. Ask, “What is this child trying to do or find out?” Then find a way to join the play that builds on the child's agenda.
  - Take care not to impose an agenda when offering help or starting conversation. For example, don't quiz a child about the color of the cups that he is stacking or using to “feed” his dinosaur.
  - Put words to what children communicate with actions or signs, and expand their single and simplified sentences with a bit more language and information.
  - Use specific and interesting vocabulary to refer to objects and actions.
  - Encourage and answer children's questions.

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

---

- Ask genuine questions, whose answers you really want to know, about what children are doing, trying to do, creating, or finding out, even if children can only answer with actions or single words.
- Offer an additional challenge or material; show children how to use tools.
- Celebrate children's discoveries with them. Show pride in their accomplishments and use specific language to describe what they did.

### How can educators help young toddlers feel good about themselves?

- Educators can:
  - Show that they value children's opinions as they engage them in conversation.
  - Show that they share their delight in children's discoveries and accomplishments.
  - Give children time to master self-chosen tasks and skills as they repeat activities that they find engaging over and over again.
  - Offer challenges that are just a step above what children can do, so that they can succeed through their own efforts.
  - Give children opportunities to be helpful, such as getting an item for another child or helping to clean up a spill.
  - Be specific with praise, and focus on what children have done on their own initiative rather than at the educator's request.
  - Use positive guidance strategies to build children's self-control, language, and social skills, along with their confidence and self-esteem.

## Glossary

**autonomy:** ability to make decisions for oneself and direct one's own behavior

**empathy:** ability to recognize, share, understand, and consider another person's feelings

**positive guidance:** helping a child learn good behaviors and self control

View the self-paced video workshop at <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators>.



# Learning Guidelines and Standards

This professional development module is aligned to Massachusetts learning guidelines and standards.

## Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers

### Social-Emotional Development:

- Relates to, trusts, and becomes attached to consistent educators.
- Notices and interacts with toddlers their own age.
- Experiences and expresses a range of emotions.
- Progresses in regulating own feelings and behavior.
- Develops a positive sense of self.

### Language and Communications Development:

- Demonstrates understanding of spoken (or signed) language.
- Develops expressive language.
- Engages in social communication.
- Uses language to ask questions and tell stories.
- Engages in pre-reading activities.
- Demonstrates interest and engagement in print literacy materials.
- Develops vocabulary, syntax and socially-appropriate communication in both languages when considered a dual language learner.
- Learns control over their movements as they reach out, grasp and release objects.

### Cognitive Development:

- Develops increasing memory of past events and knowledge.
- Demonstrates an awareness that predictable things happen as a result of actions.
- Experiments with a variety of problem solving strategies.

## Learning Guidelines and Standards (continued)

---

- Explores materials and discovers mathematical concepts.
- Develops early scientific skills through exploration and discovery.

### Physical Health and Well-Being Development:

- Develops ability to control and refine small muscles (fine motor).
- Develops sensorimotor skills where children use their senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch—to guide and integrate their interactions.

### Approaches to Learning:

- Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner.
- Becomes intentional and persistent in their learning and discovery.

## Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

### Center and School Based:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 2**  
Materials that promote cultural and individual identity, family relations, cultural appreciation, and cognitive and social development are integrated into the curriculum and children's everyday experiences.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 3**  
Educators engage children in meaningful conversations; use open-ended questions; provide opportunities throughout the day to scaffold children's language which supports the development of more complex receptive and expressive language; encourage children's use of language to share ideas; stimulate problem solving; and guides children in engaging in positive peer interactions.

### Family Child Care:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**  
Educator has participated in formal professional development on how to support positive relationships and interactions with children through positive, warm and nurturing interactions.

## Learning Guidelines and Standards (continued)

---

- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 4** Educators engage children in meaningful conversations, as age and developmentally appropriate; use open-ended questions and provide opportunities throughout the day to scaffold their language which supports the development of more complex receptive and expressive language, support children's use of language to share ideas, problem solve and have positive peer interactions.



## Resources for Further Learning

Find more information on supporting young toddlers' learning.

Johnson, J., & Johnson, T. (2006). *Do-It-Yourself Early Learning: Easy and Fun Activities and Toys from Everyday Home Center Materials*. Redleaf Press.

*Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers* (November 2010, Revised May 2011).

- *Introduction to the Toddler Stage*, pp. 88–89
- *The Importance of Supporting Language Development in the First Three Years*, pp. 179–181
- *Behavior Guidance for Infants and Toddlers*, pp. 182–184

<http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/curriculum-and-learning/>

Resources for Early Learning. Media-rich learning resources for educators, parents, and caregivers of children.

<http://www.resourcesforearlylearning.org>

Self-Control 12–24 Months. ZERO TO THREE.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/self-control-12-24-months-1-1.html>

Why Do Toddlers Bite? Finding the Right Response. ZERO TO THREE.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/chew-on-this-resources-on-biting.html>



# Training Evaluation

Thank you for your participation. This evaluation is designed to evaluate what you have learned at this training. Please take the time to complete the evaluation by rating each question "1" through "4" with "4" being the highest.

Training: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

	1	2	3	4
Did the presenter identify the learning goals at the start of the training?				
Were the learning goals met?				
Did the material presented meet your needs and expectations?				
Was there time for discussion and questions and answers?				
Were the handouts current and relevant?				
Was the presenter knowledgeable and able to answer relevant questions?				
Did the presenter make use of different learning modalities (audio, visual, etc.?)				

What did you learn that you will be able to apply to your work?