Cuddling, Consciousness, and Cognition: The Significance of Emotional Engagement on Development and Learning

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Guiding Principles

- Development begins in the prenatal period and extends throughout life.
- Nurturing and responsive relationships provide the foundation for healthy growth and development.
- Development occurs through a complex interaction between genetic factors and environmental experiences.
- Optimal growth is achieved when good health and nutrition are combined with nurturing and responsive caregiving.
- Genetic factors and environmental deficiencies can cause developmental delays.
- Development occurs across multiple domains:
  - Development in one domain influences development in other domains.
  - Development proceeds through a predictable sequence of milestones.
- Cultural context influences every aspect of development.
- Children’s individual differences and temperament influence development and learning.
- Children’s learning occurs throughout the day through everyday experiences and routines.
- Children’s learning can be enhanced by families and early childhood teachers.
- All children can benefit and learn from sharing experiences with other children.
- There is a strong, direct connection between the early years and later success in school and life.
Infant and Toddler Nurturing
(as found in Jeff Johnson’s Babies In the Rain:
Promoting Play, Exploration, and Discovery with Infants and Toddlers)

- Feed brains and bodies
- Care for you to care for them
- Take clues from their cues
- Get attached
- Play every day
- Tune in to temperaments
- Focus on routines
- Seek continuity
- Drive learning with interests
- Allow self-direction
- Let them do it
- Build brains with repetition
- Devote time to learning
- Stimulate, but don’t overstimulate
- Choose small groups
- Love language
Attachment

Secure

Avoidant

Anxious

Disorganized
**SEAL**

**Stimulus** (any sensory provocation)

**Emotion** (positive or negative)

**Attention** (positive emotions drive executive functions—negative emotions drive survival)

**Learning** (the response to the attentional variant)

(adapted from Robert Sylwester’s *A Biological Brain in a Cultural Classroom*)